MORAL

ENTERTAINMENTS

On the most Important

PRACTICAL TRUTHS

OF THE

Christian Religion.

In THREE VOLUMES.

By *ROBERT MANNING.*

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for THO. MEIGHAN, in *Drury-Lane.*

M.DCC.XLII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE
LORD PETRE,
BARON of *WRITTLE.*

MY LORD,

THE following moral Tracts owe their Birth principally to the generous Bounty of the noble Family which is completely happy in having your Lordſhip for its Head. 'Tis therefore an Act of Grati-

tude, nay of Juſtice, to make an Offering of them to your Lordſhip, who may claim them as your Right; and they have reciprocally a kind of Title to your Lordſhip's Protection, which they now humbly beg of you. Your moſt honour'd Father and Grandfather (whoſe Memories are ſtill as dear to all that knew them, as their Perſons were whilſt alive) were pleaſed to honour them with their Eſteem; and their two moſt excellent*ſurvivingLadies, who are the Patterns and Ornament of their Sex, have likewiſe done me that Honour. I have therefore Encouragement enough to hope they will not be unacceptable to your Lord-

* One of the Ladies is ſince deceaſed.

ſhip;

ſhip; nor have I any Reaſon to fear the Liberty I now take, in Publiſhing under the Protection of your Lordſhip's Name, will give Offence to thoſe who are of a different Perſuaſion from us. For tho' they diſagree from us in ſome Articles of Faith, we all agree in acknowledging the indiſpenſable Obligation incumbent on us, of practiſing all the moral Duties of a Chriſtian Life. Now theſe alone are the Subject of the following Diſcourſes; and if I ſometimes touch paſſingly upon a controverted Point, it is not to conteſt or diſpute, but only to uſher in ſome particular Duty, with which it has a neceſſary Connection.

Not to treſpaſs upon your

Lordſhip's Patience, I will only add, that nothing but the deep Senſe of Gratitude, which I have for the innumerable Favours I have received from your moſt honour'd Family (to which I am indebted for all I poſſeſs in this World) could have prevail'd upon me to give this publick Teſtimony of it. May your Lordſhip live many Years, to be the Honour as well as Support of your Family; the Father of the Poor; a Refuge to the Diſtreſs'd; and, in a Word, a faithful Imitator of the illuſtrious Patterns of Virtue you have daily before your Eyes; which are the moſt hearty Wiſhes of,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's *moſt obedient and humble Servant,*

R. MANNING.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE *following* Entertainments *having hitherto ſerved only for the Uſe of a private Aſſembly, the Reader muſt not be ſurpriſed to find me ſometimes addreſſing myſelf, as is uſual in* Sermons, *to the Congregation before me. However, I did not think it proper to call them by that Name; becauſe the Method commonly uſed in Sermons is very different from what I have made Choice of in theſe Diſcourſes. But it is not at all material by what Name they are call'd, ſo they do but anſwer the principal End they are deſign'd for, which is, to move Sinners to a ſerious Repentance and Amendment of Life, and give them the beſt*

Advice I can in order to it. 'Twas this I had principally in View in my Choice of the important Truths I have handled in relation to Death, Judgment, Hell, *and* Heaven; *the* Enormity, *and* fatal Conſequences *of* Sin, *&c. which are the Subjects treated in the thirty-one* Entertainments *of the* firſt Part. * *But what will appear peculiar in this Part is, that the Diſcourſes it contains are linked together with almoſt the ſame Connection, as the ſeveral Chapters of a Book relating to one Subject.*

The ſecond Part *is made up of miſcellaneous and unconnected Subjects; ſome of which I was led to by the Goſpels of the* Sundays, *on which I had Occaſion to ſpeak; others were my voluntary Choice, becauſe I thought them uſeful to the Generality of Chriſtians. But I have always taken care not to force my Text to come over to my Subject, but to make my Subject follow my Text; ſo that whoever reads but the Text will immediately know*

* The Author at firſt deſigned but two Parts, but the Publiſher found it more commodious to divide the whole Work into three Volumes.

wha

what Entertainment is prepared for him. And 'tis for this Reaſon I have not confined myſelf to any particular Goſpel, nor even always to the New Teſtament, but allow'd myſelf full Liberty to take my Text from any Part of the Word of God: that ſo I might be wholly unconſtrain'd in the Choice of my Subject; wherein I always had a principal Regard to the Benefit of thoſe I was to inſtruct.

I will not here trouble the Reader with any Apology for the Meanneſs of my Performance. For let that be as it will, I have done my beſt to do him good: And if in reading the following Entertainments *he will but take the Intereſt of his Salvation as ſeriouſly to Heart, as I have labour'd to inſtruct him in the Method of attaining to it, I hope I ſhall not be wholly fruſtrated of the End I have propoſed to myſelf; which is, to be aſſiſting to him in the Management of that important Concern.*

However, I will not preſume to flatter myſelf, that the Entertainments I have prepared will pleaſe all Sorts of Palates; being ſenſible that thoſe, who are

already conſiderably advanced in the Way of Perfection, would be much more agreeably entertain'd with Lectures of a more ſublime and ſpiritual Taſte. For I cannot deny but the greateſt Part of the Subjects I have choſen are to the Perſons now mention'd much like the firſt Rudiments of Learning to a conſummate Scholar: And tho' the very Alphabet of Chriſtianity, and the moſt vulgar Truths of the Chriſtian Doctrine may be render'd profitable, even to the moſt perfect; 'tis certain, however, that all Truths are not equally uſeful to all States. St. Paul *ſpoke Wiſdom amongſt the Perfect*; ſapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos: *But to the Imperfect he wrote thus,* I have fed you with Milk, and not with Meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet are ye able. *So that the Circumſtances of Perſons are no leſs to be conſider'd in the Choice of Advice, or Truths to be deliver'd to them, than their Conſtitutions in the Choice of Meats.*

Now I have neither writ for Prieſts *nor* Religious, *but for* Laicks *only; that is,*

is, for Perſons engaged in the Commerce of the World, and expoſed to all the Dangers and Corruptions of it: And theſe I have endeavour'd to feed with Milk, and not with Meat; for they are not able to bear it; *that is, I have made it my principal Buſineſs to inſtruct them in all the moſt eſſential and indiſpenſable Duties of a Chriſtian Life: I have laid ſuch Conſiderations before them, as are moſt proper to wean their Hearts from all ſinful and inordinate Affections to the Things of this World; to inſpire them with a Hatred to Sin, a Love of Virtue, and a ſerious Concern for the Salvation of their Souls: Finally, I have recommended to them a regular Uniformity in the Practice of ſuch Exerciſes and Devotions, as are both ſuited to their Circumſtances, and will help to nouriſh and ſtrengthen the forementioned Chriſtian Diſpoſitions in their Souls.*

All this, I hope, they will find perform'd in the three Volumes of theſe Entertainments. Wherein if they meet ſometimes with Repetitions of the ſame Truths or Maxims, I muſt aſſure them

it

it was wholly unavoidable. First, *becauſe ſince ſeveral Duties flow from one and the ſame Principle, it was impoſſible to explain theſe ſeveral Duties without repeating the Principle upon which they are grounded.* 2dly, *Becauſe general Remedies muſt of Neceſſity be repeated as often as any particular Diſtemper, for which they are preſcribed, is ſpoken of.* And, 3dly, *As the ſame unhappy State of Sinners, the Dangers that attend it, and the Methods of their Cure are repreſented under diverſe Parables or Figures, in moralizing upon ſome of theſe I was unavoidably lead to a Repetition of the ſame Reflections, Remonſtrances, and Advice; without which, the Subject I had undertaken, could not be fully handled, and my Diſcourſe upon it would have been manifeſtly defective.*

But tho' theſe Reaſons had not obliged me to a frequent Repetition of ſome Truths; yet I believe ſome Readers at leaſt will find their Account in it: For all Perſons are not quite ſo happy in their Memories, nor ſo eaſy in receiving laſting

ing Impreſſions, but that they may ſtand in need of being told the ſame Thing oftner than once. Beſides, as the ſame Meat does not always go down with an equal Reliſh, ſo it is with ſpiritual Truths, which are the Food of our Souls: What we may not reliſh, or be touch'd with at one Time, may have better Succeſs, and affect us very ſenſibly at another. St. Auguſtine *was in a Moment determined to an entire Change of Life by reading a few Lines in St.* Paul; *yet it is probable he had read them many times before: But till that happy Moment, they had been as ſo much Seed thrown upon a barren Soil. And we obſerve the ſame Diverſity of Succeſs in phyſical Preſcriptions: For the ſame Phyſick adminiſter'd to the ſame Patient has a good Effect ſometimes, and often none at all. And therefore as a Patient cannot reaſonably be angry at his Phyſician for repeating the ſame Doſe as often as he thinks it for his Good, ſo the Reader cannot juſtly quarrel with me for giving him the ſame Advice often over, unleſs he can convince me that every one, who ſhall read theſe*

Enter-

Entertainments, will be ſo docile as not to ſtand in need of being told the ſame Thing oftner than once, which I can rather wiſh, than hope for; ſince we find by Experience that the Diſtempers of the Soul are uſually even more obſtinate than thoſe of the Body.

I hope I ſhall not need to fear being accuſed of too much Rigour. For tho' I have been under a Neceſſity of handling many ſevere Truths, I am not conſcious to myſelf of having overſtrain'd any.

But be that as it will, I ſincerely ſubmit both this and whatever I have writ, to the Judgment and Correction of my Superiours. And being ſenſible how eaſily ſome unguarded Expreſſions may have ſlip'd from my Pen in ſo great a Number and Variety of Diſcourſes, it is my hearty Requeſt, that whether I be alive or dead, they may not be printed without being firſt ſtrictly examined by ſome Perſon of known Judgment and Learning.

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THE

First ENTERTAINMENT.

The Certainty of DEATH.

In all thy Works remember thy laſt End,
Eccl. vii. 40.

MAN'S greateſt Weakneſs conſiſts in receiving too eaſily Impreſſions from ſenſible Objects. The Cares and Solicitudes of Life fill his Heart, and it's Pleaſures corrupt it by drawing it from God and the Concerns of a future State: So that when any agreeable Object preſents itſelf, we naturally move towards it with Affection, and entertain it with Pleaſure. It poſſeſſes the Imagination, it ſeizes the Heart; and when the Place is thus taken

up to our Satisfaction, all ſerious Thoughts are ſo much Wormwood, preſented to Perſons that are gratifying themſelves with the moſt delicious Wines: And we are ſo far from inviting them to us, that we uſually reject them, as envious Intruders that come to diſturb or imbitter all our Pleaſures.

This Eaſineſs in our Nature of receiving violent Impreſſions from ſenſible Objects, may be looked upon as the Root of all our Paſſions, and by Conſequence of all the Diſorders of human Life; and the beſt Remedy againſt this Weakneſs is the frequent Conſideration of ſuch Truths, as are moſt proper either to prevent the Violence of thoſe Impreſſions, or give an early Check to them, when they happen to ſurpriſe us. The Remedy is diſtaſteful indeed, but abſolutely neceſſary, like bitter Draughts to recover a decayed or depraved Appetite.

Now of all the Truths of Chriſtian Religion, none are more proper to produce theſe happy Effects, than thoſe which regard our *laſt End*, eſpecially, if by repeated ſerious Reflections we imprint them ſo deeply in our Hearts, as to render them familiar to us. *In all thy Works remember thy laſt End.* Oh! how little would this World appear, if like the Royal Prophet

we

we always kept Eternity in View! How weak would all its Charms become, if we conſidered, and were convinced in our Hearts, that they are the Seeds of everlaſting Miſery and Torments! Would Men ſo eaſily venture upon the Violation of God's holy Law, if they remembered that there is a Day to come, in which that Law will judge them, and if found guilty, doom them to eternal Flames! Or would they have the Boldneſs to live on for Months and Years together in the State of mortal Sin, if they reflected ſeriouſly that Death may ſurpriſe them in that State; and that if it ſhould ſurpriſe them, they are loſt without Remedy! No, certainly. All criminal Pleaſures, preſented to a Heart penetrated with theſe Truths, would loſe their Reliſh. Innocence would find them an effectual Preſervative againſt Sin; and the moſt corrupt Temper would grow uneaſy under the Stings and Terrors they would leave behind them.

For which Reaſon, as the *Holy Ghoſt* has recommended to us the Thoughts of Death and Eternity, as a univerſal Remedy againſt Sin; ſo the *evil Spirit*, who oppoſes our Salvation with the utmoſt Malice, knowing by Experience the Power and Efficacy of this Remedy, not only in thoſe whom it has preſerved from fall-

ing, but many more, whom it has effectually delivered from the Tyranny of their Paſſions, and reſcued from eternal Death; the Devil, I ſay, who has found this by Experience, does all he can to keep thoſe wholſome Thoughts at the greateſt Diſtance from us; but eſpecially from thoſe, whom he has already in his Power: And therefore if the ſudden Death of any Perſon, or ſome exemplary Judgment happens to alarm them, as it does ſometimes, the Devil fails not to procure them immediately ſome Diverſion, or Amuſement, to put it out of their Heads. It frightens them a little at firſt, wears off by degrees, and ſo they think no more of it.

In like manner if the caſual Hearing of ſome pious Diſcourſe ſhould begin to touch them, the Devil has Opportunities and Objects ready at hand to work upon their prevailing Paſſions, and by means of them to prevent the Continuance of any other Impreſſion. Nay, if former Objects, that have ſerved to entertain them with criminal Pleaſures for ſome Time, begin to loſe their Charm, and grow ſtale upon their Hands, the Devil is officious enough to furniſh them with freſh ones, leſt their Paſſions coming to cool, or abate with Diſuſe, ſhould give Opportunity for ſerious Thoughts to work them into a better

a better Diſpoſition. And thus he leads them on thoughtleſs from Sin to Sin, till either a ſudden Death, occaſioned perhaps by the Exceſs of criminal Diſorders, hurries them to the Tribunal of God; or, if they have ſome Time of Sickneſs allowed them, they are either ſtrongly tempted to die impenitent, or at the beſt have nothing but the Uncertainty and Deceitfulneſs of a Death-bed Repentance to depend upon for their eternal Salvation. And 'tis one of theſe the Devil always aims at in diverting Sinners from the wholſome Thoughts of Death; to the End that, by never thinking of it till it come, *ruſhing upon them like a Storm* (as the Word of God expreſſes it) they may always live unprepared for it.

In order therefore to prevent this irreparable Misfortune, I ſhall now begin with ſome Conſiderations upon the *Certainty of Death*; which ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

The fifth Chapter of *Geneſis* furniſhes us with a moſt excellent Meditation upon Death. It contains a Liſt of thoſe ancient Patriarchs who firſt propagated Mankind, and each Verſe is cloſed with this doleful Sentence, *et mortuus eſt*, and he died. *Adam* lived 930 Years, *et mortuus eſt*, and he died. *Enos* lived 905 Years,

et mortuus eſt, and he died. *Mathuſala* lived 969 Years, *et mortuus eſt*, and he died. In effect, theſe few Words, *vixit et mortuus eſt*, he lived and died, are a compendious Hiſtory of Mankind: Since of all thoſe Millions of Men, Women, and Children, from the firſt that entered upon the Theatre of this World, to him who went off laſt, the moſt aſſured Account that can be given of them is, that they all *lived* and *died*. Some indeed have been alowed to act a longer Part than others; but all made their *Exit* at laſt, and were forced to ſubmit to the Stroke of Death.

Enoch alſo and *Elijah*, who are reſerved by God to be his Champions againſt the wicked *Antichriſt*, muſt undergo at laſt the common Puniſhment of Sin. The Payment of the Debt is not remitted but delayed; and Death will claim its Right before they can be cloathed with Immortality. Nay, the bleſſed *Mother of God*, tho' privileged in an extraordinary Manner, yet was not exempt from paying the common Debt of the Children of *Adam*. And *Chriſt* himſelf, having taken our Sins upon him, would not enter into Glory, but by becoming firſt *obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*.

Thus

Thus Almighty God ſeems to have taken care that the Belief we have of the Certainty of Death ſhall not be weakened by any of thoſe Artifices, Men ordinarily make uſe of to diſguiſe many other Truths that ſuit not with their Inclinations. For though no Truth be more diſreliſhing to Nature than that we muſt once die, yet none was ever leſs doubted of. The unqueſtionable Experience of ſo many Ages already paſt, forms in every Man's Judgment ſo full a Conviction of it, that even thoſe who had the Vanity to think themſelves ſo far exalted above the reſt of human Kind, as to challenge divine Honours, were never ſo mad as to flatter themſelves into an Opinion of their being exempt from the general Law of Death.

The Devil himſelf, ſince the firſt ſad Proof of Mortality in the Death of *Abel*, never had the Impudence to impoſe upon any Man that he ſhould not die. It was indeed the Cheat he once put upon our firſt Parents before Experience could give him the Lye. But this Impoſture has ſince been too groſs to ſucceed a ſecond time. He therefore ſays not to us, *ye ſhall not die*, but he only endeavours to make us believe we ſhall not die ſo ſoon as perhaps we may be apt to fear. He tells us we have Youth or Health on our

ſide, the Proſpect of many Years before us, and a ſtrong Conſtitution, to ſecure us againſt an untimely End: Aiming by theſe Artifices to keep the Thoughts of Death at the greateſt Diſtance from us, ſince he cannot deſtroy our Belief of it.

For this Reaſon many have endeavoured to countermine the Devil's Craft and Malice, by keeping a Death's-Head in their Bed-chambers or Cloſets, to ſerve them as a Looking-glaſs to ſee themſelves in, and be daily put in mind of what they muſt once come to. So the pious *Maximilian* had always a Coffin ſtanding at his Bed-ſide, that he might begin and end each Day with the wholſome Thought of Death: and another Prince for the ſame Purpoſe ordered one of his Pages to greet him daily with this Morning Salutation, *Remember that thou art a mortal Man.*

However, we need not have recourſe to ſuch extraordinary Expedients to put us in mind of our Mortality. The very Air we breathe, the Meat we daily eat, and the Cloaths we wear, to hinder Death from ſeizing us before the Time ordain'd by Providence, may do this Office for us. Nay, the very Earth whereon we tread, under which there lie already crumbled into Duſt ſo many of our Acquaintance and Relations, who were once as gay and merry

merry, and as ſtrong and healthful as the youngeſt of this Company, may as we walk, and often loiter away our precious Hours, put us in mind what coſtly Matter theſe Bodies, we ſo idolize, were originally compoſed of, and what they muſt again return into. We need no other Monitor to make us remember that their Beginning was and End will be no other than Duſt and Clay.

Who is the Man alive, (ſays *David*) *that will not ſee Death?* For the Certainty of Death is the ſame as that of Life. Becauſe Life, if rightly conſidered, is but the Way or Paſſage to Death; into which (ſays *Seneca*) whoever is once entered, muſt continue without ſtopping till he falls into the Hands of Death. *Remember* (ſays *Solomon*) *that Death ſtops not:* and the Reaſon is becauſe Life ſtops not. So that Life is nothing but a continual dying; that is, a continual moving towards its End, which is Death. For which Reaſon the Word of God compares Man's Life to a *Race.* Which Similitude expreſſes both the Swiftneſs and uninterrupted Continuance of its Courſe. And we may truly ſay we are already dead to all the Years we have already lived; ſince what is paſt can now no more be reckon'd a Part of our Lives,

than the Blood let out of our Veins, or what Age has already conſumed of our Bodies, can be called a Part of our preſent Being.

Since therefore all muſt die; ſince Death is an irreſiſtable Debt, which all muſt pay to Nature; ſince we are already dying, and in the Hands of Death, we ought in Time to contract a Familiarity with it, that we may not be ſurpriſed, when it comes to ſeize us once for all.

St. *Auſtin* upon theſe Words of the Pſalmiſt, *Let them deſcend alive into Hell*, gives this moſt excellent Advice; *Let us deſcend alive, that we may not deſcend into Hell when we are dead.* Now it will be no leſs profitable to go down ſometimes by Thought and Meditation into the Grave of ſome deceaſed Friend; where if our Curioſity invites us to inquire what State his Soul is now in, let us reflect upon his Life paſt; and we may in ſome Degree, though not with an infallible Certainty, inform ourſelves. Becauſe a good Life is generally rewarded with a happy Death, and a good Death ſeldom follows a bad Life.

If he lived (as St. *Paul* exhorts us) *temperately, juſtly, and godly, looking for the bleſſed Hope, and the glorious Appearing*

of

of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, we may confidently pronounce the Soul of that Man happy. But if, on the contrary, he *followed Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts*, if he lived in the Practice of wilful Sin, and continued in it to his laſt Sickneſs; 'tis true indeed, we cannot paſs a peremptory Sentence upon him, becauſe the Depth of God's Mercies is as unſearchable as his Judgments; yet we may without any Danger of raſh Judgment pronounce his Salvation to be very doubtful, and even queſtionable, beyond the ordinary Degree of Uncertainty which attends the Generality of Men, whatever Appearances there may be for or againſt him.

Let us conſider next, that as he was once what we are now, ſtrong and healthful, big with Projects for the Time to come, and as little ſuſpecting the Stroke of Death as the reſt of his ſurviving Friends, ſo muſt we once be what he now is (and God Almighty knows how ſoon) wrapt up in a Shroud, ſhut up within a narrow Coffin, laid under Ground, trampled upon by future Generations, and in a Word, as little either thought or ſpoken of as he now is. Our deareſt Friends will then paſs by us, or walk over us with the ſame Indifference and Unconcern, as if

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we were a Thing of paſt Ages, and had never had the leaſt Share in their Thoughts. And here is an End of all that Eſteem and Love we often court with ſo much Paſſion, and purchaſe perhaps by pawning Soul and Conſcience for it. This is the Reward we muſt expect from this ſo much adored and courted World. Oh! how truly happy are they, whoſe Hearts are fixed on God alone; who are enamour'd of no Beauty, and ſeek no Love, but his. For this is a ſolid and laſting Good, which alone can comfort us at the Hour of Death, accompany us even beyond the Grave, where all Things elſe forſake us, and when theſe Bodies are turned into Duſt, render our Souls eternally happy.

But let us ſtill paſs on to a third Conſideration, and imagining ourſelves to be in the Grave with ſome deceaſed Friend, let us entertain ourſelves with him for ſome few Moments, and aſk him ſome Account of the other World. Let us inquire what his Thoughts now are of his Life paſt. Oh! let his Condition be what it will, we may be ſure, that if he were allow'd to ſpeak, his Anſwer would be, that were he to live his paſt Years over again, he would employ them otherwiſe than he did formerly, or we now do. All worldly Pleaſures, ſinful Exceſſes, unprofitable A-

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muſements to trifle away Time, Purſuit of Honours, Heaping up Riches, Studying Revenge, and the like, would be the fartheſt from his Thoughts.

For, if his Soul be happily united to God, the bleſſed Sight of that incomprehenſible Majeſty, that infinite Goodneſs, and infinitely charming Beauty, has now given him a quite different Idea from what he formerly had, or Men can have in this Life of the monſtrous Blackneſs and Deformity of Sin. He would tell us, that were his Soul to return again to his Body, it were impoſſible he ſhould ever have the Heart to offend God with deliberate Reflection.

But if his Soul, unworthy yet to be admitted to the bleſſed Fruition, be for ſome time condemned to purging Flames, till ſhe be purified from all Droſs and Allay of earthly Defilements, and has paid the laſt Farthing of the Debt contracted by his paſt Follies; Oh! could he utter his Thoughts, he would give you a moſt lamentable Account of his Sufferings. He would tell you his Soul is tortured with unſpeakable Anguiſh for his paſt Sins; that his Grief for being kept back from the Enjoyment of Almighty God is beyond Expreſſion or Imagination; finally, that all the Torments of this World are

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not to be compared with the leaſt of thoſe his Soul endures.

But what a frightful Account would he give of his Condition, if his unhappy Soul be doom'd to everlaſting Flames! With what piercing tho' fruitleſs Sorrow would he bewail his paſt Pleaſures! How many heavy Curſes would he heap upon this treacherous World, or rather his own treacherous Paſſions, which to gratify themſelves have betrayed him to eternal Miſery and Torments! He would doubtleſs tell us with the deepeſt Anguiſh of a deſpairing Soul, that were he Maſter of ten thouſand Worlds, he would joyfully ſacrifice them all for one Hour of that Time, of which we are as laviſh as if it were of no Value: He would embrace with Joy, though it were for Millions of Years, the moſt rigid Penance that ever was undergone, ſo he were but once more under a Poſſibility of ſaving his Soul.

This is undoubtedly the Account he would give us of the other World, if he were permitted to utter his Thoughts, and is without all Diſpute a faithful Repreſentation of the Ideas the Souls departed have of the eternal State, in which they are now fixed, and towards which we are haſtening as faſt as the Wings of Time, and the

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ſhort Courſe of an uncertain periſhable Life can carry us.

And what remains then but that we now begin, whilſt we have yet Time, what we ſhall otherwiſe hereafter wiſh to have done with a fruitleſs Repentance of our having neglected to do it, whilſt we had it in our Power. Remember, *Chriſtians*, and reflect ſeriouſly upon it that you muſt once die. 'Tis as certain, and as much above all Diſpute, as that you are now alive. God Almighty has decreed it from Eternity, and his Decrees are as unchangeable as himſelf. Dying therefore is a Part you muſt once act: But it depends upon your own Free-will, to make Death a Paſſage to a happy or unhappy Eternity. If you live well, God's Grace will not abandon you in your laſt Conflict, but ſtrengthen you to *die the Death of the Juſt*, which is *precious in his Sight*. But if you live ill, you run a dreadful Hazard of being juſtly permitted by Almighty God to die as you lived.

It therefore highly concerns us all to make our whole Life a continual Preparation for Death. This is the only End for which it was beſtowed upon us, and for which it has been till now, and is ſtill continued to us by the Divine Bounty. If hitherto we have not anſwered theſe

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Purpoſes, 'tis now high Time to think ſeriouſly of it. And how happy are we that it is ſtill Time! What a Mercy is it that we have not been cut off, whilſt we were guilty of mortal Sin, which has been our Caſe ſo often! Where ſhould we now be, if this had happened to us, as it has to Millions before us? Can we think of it without Trembling? Can we think of it without a Senſe of Gratitude to the infinite Goodneſs that has preſerved us, and a Hatred to thoſe Sins which would have rendered us eternally unhappy. Theſe are doubtleſs the Fruits which God's Forbearance expects of us. This is the Uſe we ought henceforward to make of it. And then Death will ceaſe to be an Evil to us. For though Death join'd with Sin be the greateſt of Evils, it is a real Good without it, as being a ſecure Paſſage to a happy Eternity.

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The Second ENTERTAINMENT.

Concerning ſome general Preparations for DEATH.

Bleſſed are thoſe Servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, ſhall find watching, Luke xii. 37.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe I furniſhed you with ſome Conſiderations upon the Certainty of Death. But this Truth, tho' never ſo evident and weighty, can be no farther uſeful to us, than as it has an Influence upon the Conduct of our Lives. For what will it avail us to have a ſpeculative Perſuaſion that we muſt once die, unleſs we conclude practically from it, that it is therefore our Duty as well as Intereſt to be always prepared for it.

This then is the immediate Conſequence to be drawn from it, *viz.* that ſince we are created to be happy, and our Happineſs depends upon Dying well, it follows, that the principal Buſineſs of Life ought to be a Preparation for Death. This is that *one, and only neceſſary thing*, which admits of no Diſpenſation, and every Thing in the World ought to yield and be

be ſacrificed to it. Eaſe, Intereſt, Honour and Pleaſure are to be conſulted no otherwiſe, than as they have a Reference to the general End of living and dying well. The Subject then of this Entertainment ſhall be the general previous Diſpoſitions required for the happy Performance of this great Work, that is, ſome general Directions relating to the Manner, how we ought to diſpoſe ourſelves beforehand for Death.

The Prophet *Iſaias* being ſent by God to King *Ezekias*, to forewarn him of his approaching End, delivered his Meſſage in theſe Words: *Put thy Houſe in Order, for thou ſhalt die, and thou ſhalt not live.* This Advice of the Prophet, *put thy Houſe in Order*, if literally taken, regards particularly thoſe, who have their Wills to make, or any temporal Concerns to ſettle before they die; and calls very preſſingly upon them to prepare themſelves for their laſt End by an early Diſcharge of this Duty. For we may truly ſay they are but very ill Managers either of their Spiritual or Temporal Concerns, who either out of Sloth, or a kind of indolent Temper, or upon any other frivolous Motive, put off their making their Wills to the laſt Extremity; it being a Buſineſs, that requires a greater Preſence of Mind than can be expected from

from a Perſon labouring under the Anguiſh of a mortal Diſtemper. Beſides, how eaſily may a dying Man be impoſed upon by intereſted Perſons about him, at a Time when for a little Eaſe he is ready to conſent to any thing that is ſuggeſted to him! and ſo it may in Effect become their Will inſtead of his: To ſay nothing of the Unſeaſonableneſs of ſuch a Concern, at a Time when his Thoughts ought to look quite another Way, and be wholly turned towards the other World, where he is then going to make his eternal Abode.

But the ill Conſequences of theſe Delays will yet appear more clearly, if we conſider the Hazard they expoſe a dying Perſon to, of dying without making any Will at all. For this is the unavoidable Conſequence, if he either happens to die ſuddenly, or to be out of his Senſes in his laſt Sickneſs. And how fatal has this often proved to Families, by engaging them in endleſs Quarrels and Law-ſuits! Nay, how prejudicial muſt it needs be to thoſe who have a juſt Title to have ſome Proviſion made for them, tho' perhaps not grounded upon any Law that can compell the next Heir to it, and are by this Means deprived of a neceſſary Subſiſtance, whilſt all is ſwept away by ſome one, who either deſerves or wants it leaſt, and will have

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no Regard either to Proximity of Blood, or the Intention of the Party deceaſed, or the Merits of thoſe whoſe paſt Services entitle them to a Gratification as much as any human Laws.

But as the making of *Wills*, ſo the Payment of *Debts*, is a Duty not to be defered to our laſt Sickneſs. Many have their Hearts ſo ſet upon their Money, that they cannot reſolve to part with it till ſuch time as they can keep it no longer. Theſe therefore ought to conſider, that a Perſon in Debt is but another Man's Caſh-keeper; and that the Sum he owes is but Money depoſited in his Hands, which he cannot detain with Juſtice any longer than he has the expreſs or tacit Conſent of the Party who has a Right to it. So that when the Creditor demands it with Juſtice and Reaſon, the Debtor, if able, is under an Obligation of Conſcience to pay it. Nay, he is bound to make himſelf able, as ſoon as he can, by retrenching all ſuperfluous and unneceſſary Expences. After which, all affected Delays are no better than ſo many repeated Acts of Injuſtice, which he cannot anſwer to God nor Man. Nor will his reſolving to diſcharge all Debts, when he is called upon to pay the common Debt of Nature, be any Plea in Favour of this Practice; becauſe we are

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bound not only to die but live like honeſt Men. And 'tis much to be ſuſpected, that he who has not the Heart to part with his Money, but when he can keep it no longer, dies with a good Will to have kept it longer, if he could; which, conſidering that in the Caſe before us, it implies Injuſtice as well as Avarice, is but a very ill Diſpoſition to accompany him to the other World.

I will therefore conclude this Head with repeating to you the Prophet's Advice; *put thy Houſe in Order.* Expect not the Approach of Death to ſettle the Concerns of this Life. Do Juſtice to your Neighbour whilſt it is a free and voluntary Act; and it will be a Comfort in your laſt Diſtreſs both to Mind and Body, to have no other Buſineſs then upon your Hands, than the performing well the laſt Scene of Life.

However, beſides this preparatory Diſpoſition conſiſting in the Regulation of the moſt important temporal Concern, there is another *Houſe* each Chriſtian has to *put in Order*, to diſpoſe himſelf for Death, *viz.* his own Soul. And this is the great Buſineſs of Life, and undoubtedly challenges his principal Care.

Conſider therefore, Chriſtian, what Condition thy Houſe is in. Examine every

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Part of it with a diligent and impartial Eye. Is thy *Faith* built upon that *Rock* which *Chriſt* ſpeaks of? Is it Proof againſt all Storms of Temptations and Perſecutions? Is there a Foundation of *Humility* laid deep enough to bear the Superſtructure of all other Virtues? Are the *Doors* and *Windows* of thy Houſe, I mean thy Senſes, ſtrongly guarded againſt the Aſſaults of Vanity, and fleſhly Luſts? Does nothing appear on the Outſide, that may ſcandalize or offend thy Neighbour?

But above all, let us conſider how this Houſe of ours is fitted within? Is it furniſhed ſuitably to the infinite Dignity of the Divine Gueſt who is to lodge in it? Does the *Holy Ghoſt* make his conſtant Abode there, or do we not often entertain his mortal Enemy? Is it not frequently haunted with evil Spirits, and God Almighty baniſhed from it? We may eaſily judge what State it is in, if we but reflect who governs, what Order is kept, what Regulations and Methods are obſerved. Is there as good OEconomy in our Spiritual as Temporal Concerns? Is there as much Care taken to preſerve the Life, Health, and Beauty of the Soul, as of the Body? Is there a Time ſet apart for Prayer, Spiritual Reading, Examination

tion of Conſcience, and other Devotions, as well as for Eating, Sleeping, Diverſions, and worldly Employments? In a Word, is *Charity* or *Self-love* Miſtreſs within? Does *Reaſon* or *Paſſion*, *Juſtice* or *Humour* bear the greateſt Sway? If *Self-love*, *Paſſion*, and *Humour* govern; alas, it cannot be doubted, but the whole Houſe is in Diſorder and Confuſion. And how unhappy is the Soul, which Death finds in this State!

But if *Charity* be Miſtreſs, if *Juſtice*, *Reaſon*, and *Religion* are conſulted in all Concerns both Spiritual and Temporal, there is ſufficient Ground to judge our Houſe is in good Order, and we need not fear to be ſurpriſed by Death. For where *Charity* is Miſtreſs of the Heart, where *Piety* and the *Fear of God* take Place of *Paſſion* and *Inclination*, there the *Holy Ghoſt* reſides undoubtedly in the Soul; and where this Divine Gueſt makes his Abode, all muſt be orderly and well-diſpoſed. Such a Soul is always prepared for her laſt Summons. Death will indeed deſtroy her Houſe of Clay, but 'tis in order to tranſlate her to thoſe heavenly Manſions, where all the Virtues, which adorned her here below, and fitted her for the State of Bliſs, will be either rewarded, or receive their final Accompliſhment and Perfection.

Whence

Whence it appears, that the Preparation we are to make for Death, is no other, than that which is to fit us for Heaven. Now nothing can fit us for Heaven, but what will be either rewarded or perfected in Heaven. *Faith* and *Hope*, *Patience* in Adverſity, *Love of Enemies*, *pardoning Injuries*, and the like, are Virtues which, to ſpeak properly, will not be perfected, but rewarded in Heaven. For, as Divines teach, there is neither *Faith* nor *Hope* in Heaven. Becauſe by *Faith* we only know God obſcurely as through a Miſt or Cloud, whereas in Heaven we ſhall ſee him *Face to Face*. *Hope* alſo, tho' never ſo firm, is always mixed with ſome *Fear*, and regards a Good not yet poſſeſſed: whereas Fruition, which is the Reward of the Life to come, is an actual Poſſeſſion of God, attended with ſuch an infallible Security, as excludes all Fear or Doubt. *Patience*, and *Love of Enemies*, can likewiſe have no Place in Heaven; becauſe in Heaven there are no *Enmities* nor *Croſſes* to be ſuffered. However, theſe Virtues are neceſſary to diſpoſe us for Heaven, becauſe its Joys are the Reward of them; and thoſe can have no Title to the Reward, who comply not with the Conditions upon which it is promiſed.

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But there are other Virtues; as *Piety*, *Humility*, *Purity*, *Conformity to the Will of God*, and *Charity* (the Queen or rather the Life and Soul of all Virtues) which will not only be rewarded, but perfected in Heaven. So that whoever is void of theſe Virtues at the Hour of Death, wants the Diſpoſitions that are requiſite to qualify him for the State of Bliſs. The Reaſon is evident, becauſe the ſpiritual Life of the Juſt in this World differs nothing in Subſtance from the eternal Life of the Saints in Heaven, ſince both the one and the other conſiſt chiefly in the *Knowledge* and *Love of God*. But as the Bleſſed in Heaven have a clearer and perfecter Knowledge of him, ſo is their Love, and other Virtues following from it, proportionably greater; and therefore differ indeed from thoſe they poſſeſſed on Earth in their Eminency and Perfection, but not in their Nature or Subſtance.

Whence it follows, that when a Soul adorn'd with theſe Virtues leaves her earthly Manſion, nothing more is requiſite to render her eternally happy, but only to perfect thoſe very Gifts ſhe brings with her, and give, as it were, the finiſhing Stroke to the Work of Grace, ſo happily begun, and carried on with Perſeverance in this Life. But if none of thoſe Gifts

or Graces, which *Glory* is to perfect, be found in her at her Entrance into the other World, what other Fate can ſhe expect, than to be for ever excluded from that bleſſed State? For how can they pretend to the Glory of the Saints, who neglecting in this Life to lay the Foundation of it, remain void of thoſe neceſſary previous Diſpoſitions, by which the Saints took care to fit themſelves for it? Or how can they lay claim to the Reward of Virtue, who bring not with them the Virtues to entitle them to it? 'Tis certainly a great Deluſion to think to paſs from a Life defiled with Sin, to a State wholly inconſiſtent with it. The Saints and Angels, who are without Spot or Stain, will not admit into their bleſſed Society but ſuch as like themſelves are pure and holy. Neither will Almighty God own them for Coheirs to the Crown and Kingdom of his Son, who have wilfully renounced, and not recovered the Grace, that made them his *adopted Children.* 'Tis to theſe unfortunate Souls St. *Auſtin* addreſſes himſelf in the following Words; *Brethren, we muſt know, that neither Pride, nor Avarice, nor Luxury, aſcends with Chriſt: No Vice of ours aſcends with our heavenly Phyſician.* For ſince the principal End of his coming into this World was to cure the Di-

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ſtempers of our Souls, and render us thereby capable of eternal Life, it follows, that they who not only neglect to make uſe of the Remedies his Goodneſs has provided for them, but ſeek rather to increaſe their Diſtempers, can have no Part with him. So that whoever cheriſhes any criminal Paſſion, and continues in this Way till his *Exit* out of this Life, whither, alas, muſt he go! Heaven will not receive him; neither are the Flames of Purgatory ſufficient to cleanſe him. No other Place remains then for him, but that of everlaſting Horror and Confuſion; where being uncapable of Change, his Soul will for ever remain under thoſe very Diſorders, in which Death found him.

I know there are many, who being engaged in ſome ſinful Habit, and terrified with the Conſiderations of Death and Eternity, have frequent Thoughts, and ſeemingly, at leaſt, reſolve to reform their Lives. But I know not how their old Habits, preſſing daily hard upon them, and their ſinful Inclinations ſtill gaining Ground by being often gratified, theſe good Thoughts and Reſolutions often come to nothing; nay, what is worſe, ſerve only to leſſen their Fears, and betray them into a kind of Security, by making them think themſelves better than they really

are, becauſe they ſeemingly reſolve to be ſo for the future. And thus they uſually drill on till they are either ſurpriſed by a ſudden and unprovided Death, or at leaſt reduced to the laſt and miſerable Shift of a Death-bed Repentance.

I hope this will never be the Caſe of any one here preſent. However, let us now ſuppoſe, which God forbid, that any of you ſhould fall into your laſt Sickneſs, whilſt engaged in any vicious Habit, as of Curſing and Swearing, Drunkenneſs, Impurity, or the like; do you rightly apprehend the Conſequence of it? If you do not, give me leave to repreſent it to you. The Conſequence is, that in the Caſe ſuppoſed you have no other Hazard for your Soul's Salvation than that of a Death-bed Repentance. The Conſequence is evident. For if a mortal Diſtemper ſhould ſeize you, whilſt you are yet engaged in any Habit of Sin, all you have to depend upon is that Preparation, which your laſt Sickneſs will allow you to make; and that I call a Death-bed Repentance.

You'll ſay, perhaps, you have no Thoughts of hazarding your Soul upon ſo dangerous an After-game. I believe you have not; but you deceive yourſelves. For though you do not expreſsly deſign any ſuch Thiug, the Devil does. And if you

you purſue thoſe very Courſes, which will moſt certainly, ſooner or later, bring you to it, what matter is it, whether you deſign it or not? No Man deſigns expreſsly to damn himſelf; and yet too many, God knows, ſtudy as effectually their own Damnation, as if they expreſsly deſign'd it. And ſo it happens in the Caſe before us. For tho' very few are ſo deſperately mad as to reſolve expreſsly to hazard all upon a Death-bed Repentance, yet all thoſe, who continue from Year to Year in their ſinful Habits, take almoſt as direct a Way to it, as if they form'd an expreſs Deſign of it. And therefore the Devil is not ſo very ſolicitous to engage Sinners in ſo deſperate a Reſolution, becauſe he finds his Work almoſt as effectually done without it. Nay, he often ſeeks to amuſe them with ſeeming Reſolutions of changing their Lives in good time, ſo to hide from them the Precipice into which they are running; the Sight whereof might frighten them into ſafer Courſes. All he has to do in the mean Time, is to continue them on in their wonted Relapſes till their laſt Sickneſs overtakes them; and then the Neceſſity of depending upon a Death-bed Repentance follows of courſe.

Let me therefore once more put this Queſtion to you; *Is your Houſe in Order?*

Are your Souls in a Readineſs for Death? Would you be willing to be ſummoned to your laſt Account this very Day? Have you already made a ſufficient Preparation for it? Happy they, who can confidently ſay they have. Happy they, who are ſo beforehand with the great Work of Salvation, that their laſt Hour, whenever it comes, may find it fully finiſhed.

The Third ENTERTAINMENT.

Of ſudden Deaths.

Be watchful; for ye know not the Day nor Hour, Matt. xxv. 13.

THO' nothing be more certain than Death, nothing is more uncertain than the Time and Circumſtances of it. So that no Man, tho' in the moſt perfect State of Health, can make any Gueſs, whether Death will come early or late; whether it will be natural or violent: finally, whether it will be ſudden or foreſeen. And this of all the Circumſtances hid from us is the moſt frightful. For tho'

tho' the preciſe Time of its coming were kept from our Knowledge, yet if we were but ſure it would not ſeize us on a ſudden, this at leaſt would be ſome Comfort. But, alas, this Comfort is denied us; and the Reaſon why it is denied us is, becauſe God will oblige us to be always watchful, and in a readineſs for his Summons at what Time ſoever, and in what Manner ſoever he ſhall pleaſe to call upon us.

For this Reaſon, I ſay, God has concealed from us not only the Time of our Death, but every Circumſtance relating to it. So that of all the Goods we poſſeſs in this World, Life itſelf is the moſt uncertain, nor have we the leaſt Encouragement to build any Security upon it. It may be taken from us when we think leaſt of it, and in ſo ſudden a Manner as to leave us no Interval of Time between perfect Health and the Stroke of Death. 'Tis upon theſe Terms we firſt entered into the World, and we continue in it upon the ſame uncertain Footing. The Subject then of this Entertainment ſhall be the Uncertainty of human Life, and the many Dangers to which it is expoſed of being taken from us by a ſudden Death.

Death being the Puniſhment of Sin, and all Men ſince the Fall of *Adam* being conceived and born in Sin, it follows that

Life is no ſooner communicated to us, but we come within the general Sentence of Death, and are doom'd to die even before we are born. Hence many paſs immediately from the Womb to the Grave, and are never allowed to ſee the Sun ſhine upon them. Others ſtep no ſooner into the World, but go off again immediately, as if they came upon no other Buſineſs than to die. Others again, after having with much care and nurſing gone through the moſt dangerous Part of Life, diſappoint in a Moment the flattering Hopes of their tender Parents, and become a Prey to Death, when they are juſt of Age to begin to taſte the Pleaſures of Life.

'Tis true, great Numbers ſurvive this Age, and have a longer Leaſe of Life allowed them: And moſt of us here preſent are bound to acknowledge the Divine Bounty, in having favoured us with this Bleſſing. However, ſince Sentence of Death is already paſſed upon us, we are but in the Condition of condemned Criminals, reprieved untill ſuch Time as it ſhall pleaſe the Sovereign Arbiter of Life and Death to give his Orders for our Execution. In the mean time, every Step we make during the ſhort Courſe of this mortal Life, brings us ſtill nearer to the Grave: and it often happens, that whilſt

Men

Men are pleaſing themſelves with the Thoughts of a long and merry Life, they find themſelves all of a ſudden in the Hands of Death, and hurried to the other World at a Time as unwelcome perhaps as unexpected.

This was the unhappy Fate of the *Rich Man* mentioned in the Goſpel, who whilſt he was projecting how to indulge himſelf with the Treaſures he had laid up, was ſummoned to render his Soul the very Night he was amuſing himſelf with theſe vain Thoughts. This was alſo the unfortunate End of *Baltazar*, that proud King of *Babylon*; who amidſt his drunken Cups, and profane Night-revels, but too often practiſed by our modern Chriſtians, ſaw a Hand upon the Wall before him writing the Sentence of his Condemnation, which was accordingly executed upon him that very Night.

How many have been ſtruck dead in the very Moment they were gratifying ſome criminal Paſſion! How many have been called to the Tribunal of God with the Cup in their Hands, or *Blaſphemy* or *Perjury* in their Mouths! In a Word, how many have laid themſelves down to Sleep in as perfect Health as any of us all, and never more ſaw the riſing Sun! or riſen in the Morning as ſound in Body, as

ſick perhaps in Soul, and have not been allowed to outlive that Day!

Now the natural Reaſon of this great Uncertainty of human Life is firſt and chiefly the very Structure of Man's Body, in regard of the incredible Number and Variety of Parts, whereof it is compoſed: and amongſt which many, particularly thoſe that lodge, and convey the Blood and vital Spirits from Part to Part, are ſo ſlender and weak, that it ſeems next to a Miracle, that ſome of them are not broken with every ſudden or violent Motion of the Body, and yet ſo neceſſary to the Preſervation of Life, that the Breaking of any may prove fatal to it.

So that Man's Body may be fitly compared to an artificial Machine, compoſed of innumerable little Springs and Wheels, the Stopping or Breaking of any of which either ſtops all the reſt, or at leaſt cauſes an Irregularity in their Motion, and puts the whole Machine out of order. For juſt ſo it happens in Man's Body, which conſiſting of innumerable little Parts of different Sorts, and all depending upon each other, and contributing to the Harmony of the whole; if but any of them receives a Hurt, or happens to be diſcompoſed, the whole Machine of the Body is affected with it, and in danger of being deſtroyed.

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Thus many have been killed with an inward Bruiſe, the cutting of an Artery, or breaking of a Vein. Inſomuch that Anatomiſts, whoſe Buſineſs it is to ſtudy the Structure of human Bodies, conſidering the prodigious Number of Veins, Fibres, Arteries, Sinews, Muſcles, Nerves, and other Parts of which they are compoſed, aſſure us that the unhappy Fate of thoſe, who are taken away by ſudden or untimely Deaths, is more to be lamented than wondered at, and that we rather ought to be ſurpriſed that greater Numbers fall not daily under the like Misfortune.

But beſides the Dependance our Lives have upon the Harmony of ſuch numberleſs and different Parts, that enter into the Compoſition of Man's Body, they alſo depend upon ſeveral outward Things, as *Meat*, *Drink*, *Air*, and the like; which often, inſtead of preſerving them, are inſtrumental to their Deſtruction. Thus when an epidemical Diſtemper reigns, the Air itſelf being for the moſt Part infected, 'tis dangerous even to breathe, tho' we cannot live one Moment without it. Thus Death is often conveyed to us from the Breath or Cloaths of thoſe we converſe with. Thus finally many meet their Death in the very *Meat*, or *Drink*, or *Phyſick*, which

which they take to prevent it. May not a mortal Fever be catched in a Moment, and ſend the ſtrongeſt Man alive to his Grave in a few Days warning? *Surfeits*, *Pleuriſies*, and *Quinſies*, often make a quicker Diſpatch, and *Apoplexies* give no Warning at all.

Add to all this the innumerable Accidents which have no inward Cauſe, but attack us from abroad, and cannot be prevented with the greateſt Caution poſſible; as the Fall of a Horſe, the overturning of a Coach, an acidental Fire, or ſuch as are occaſioned by Thunder, Lightning, or violent Storms. And are not ſome of theſe the daily Miniſters of ſudden Deaths? Do not the weekly Bills of Mortality of one great City only furniſh us almoſt continually with ſome Inſtances of this Nature? ſo that what with the frail Structure of our Bodies on the one hand, and the innumerable Accidents to which they are expoſed on the other, Man's Life hangs by ſo weak and ſlender a Thread, that nothing but the greateſt Blindneſs and Stupidity imaginable can make us hazard our eternal Salvation upon the long Continuance of it.

'Tis certain, that conſidering both the Greatneſs of the Hazard, and the eternal Conſequences depending upon it, there needs

needs no more to oblige all Men, that are not wholly loſt to Faith and Reaſon, to live with the ſame Watchfulneſs and Precaution, as if they were infallibly aſſured, that a ſudden Death would be their Lot ſome time or other. We ought indeed to pray and hope it will not: But 'tis moſt certain, no Man can have a poſitive Security againſt it. For ſince the natural and immediate Cauſes are either the uſual Accidents from abroad, againſt which there is no Shelter, or the inward Diſpoſitions of the Body, which are ſo hidden and ſecret, that no Man can tell how near the Danger threatens, what manner of Aſſurance can any Man have that a ſudden Death will not be his Deſtiny.

'Tis true, there is an over-ruling Providence, which governs all Things, *reaches ſtrongly from End to End, and diſpoſes all Things ſweetly*: So that, as *Chriſt* himſelf aſſures us, there falls not even a ſingle Hair from our Heads but by its Orders. Our mortal Bodies, as they are God's Workmanſhip no leſs than our immortal Souls, ſo are they no leſs the Object of his Care. And tho' we ourſelves are under him entruſted with the Management of them, and are bound to perform our Parts to the utmoſt of our Power, yet ſince we are but as Inſtruments under his Direction, 'tis the

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ſame inviſible and unerring Hand, by which they were firſt formed, that now rules and guides them; and can, if it pleaſes, conduct them ſafe through all the Stages of Human Life, to the natural End of their mortal Race. And therefore, 'tis not to be queſtioned, but Almighty God, who is the ſupreme Cauſe and firſt Mover of all Things, has it in his Power to diſpoſe natural Cauſes ſo, as to preſerve us from all Accidents of ſudden and untimely Deaths.

All this, I ſay, is true, and 'tis the greateſt Comfort good Chriſtians have, to conſider that they live under the Conduct and Protection of an all-ruling Providence, which will not permit any thing to happen to them, but what may contribute to their greater Good, and the Security of their eternal Welfare; ſo that the many Perils wherewith they live encompaſſed, ſerve only to excite their Fervour in good Works, and increaſe their Truſt and Confidence in God, to whom they cry out with full Aſſurance in theſe Words of the *Pſalmiſt, though I ſhall walk in the midſt of the Shade of Death, I will fear no Evil becauſe thou art with me.*

But in all this there is not the leaſt Encouragement or Comfort for ill Livers, and their Caſe is in all Reſpects as different as

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their Lives from that of the Juſt. The Reaſon hereof is very plain; becauſe, tho' there be a *general Providence*, that extends itſelf to all Mankind, yet there is beſides a *ſpecial* one, which only regards God's faithful Servants, and in which ill Livers have no Share. The three *Iſraelites* walked in the *Babylonian* Furnace as in a refreſhing Air, whilſt thoſe, who kindled the Flames, were conſumed by them. *Daniel* was as ſafe in the Midſt of *Lions*, as in the Company of *Lambs*; whereas his Accuſers could ſcarce reach the Ground, before they were devoured by them. 'Tis true, theſe Events being miraculous, no general Rule can be drawn from them. But whether God makes uſe of ſupernatural Means, or employs natural Cauſes to bring about the Deſigns of his Providence, the Effect is the ſame; and tho' we ſee not manifeſt Miracle, it is not to be doubted, but God diſpoſes natural Cauſes ſo in Favour of his faithful Servants, as to protect them from a thouſand Accidents, in which they would have periſhed, without his ſpecial Providence watching over them.

But ſuppoſe a ſudden Death ſhould be the Lot of a juſt Man, as it ſometimes comes to paſs, and has happened even to great Saints, we can look upon it no otherwiſe than as a providential Mercy upon him;

him; Almighty God making uſe of this Way to preſerve him from the uſual Terrors of Death, to haſten his Paſſage to a better Life, and perhaps to prevent his falling into Occaſions, which might have drawn him into Sin. But to ill Livers a ſudden Death is always an irreparable Evil; ſince it deprives them in an Inſtant of every Thing in which they placed their Happineſs in this Life, and throws them into a State of endleſs Miſery and Torments. So that the very ſame Thing, which may be a Mercy to the Juſt, and turn to their greater Good, as all Things do by the ſecret Diſpenſations of Providence, is on the contrary the ſevereſt Judgment that can fall upon Sinners. And yet theſe very Perſons, who alone have Reaſon to apprehend a ſudden Death, are they who uſually fear it the leaſt: And the Reaſon why they fear it leaſt, is not their Courage, but Stupidity. They chooſe rather to hazard dying any way, without thinking of it, than to diſturb their Pleaſures with the Thought of ſo ungrateful an Object: And ſo it naturally follows, that as they ſeldom or never think of Death, they are the moſt liable to be ſurpriſed by it.

But what Way ſoever we conſider ſudden Deaths, whether with regard to natural or ſupernatural Cauſes, 'tis manifeſt, that none have

have greater Reaſon to apprehend their periſhing that way, than they, whoſe diſorderly Lives deſerve no better Fate, and are often the natural Occaſion of it. How many have periſhed in unjuſt Quarrels, occaſioned by Luxury, Gaming, or Night-Revels! How many deſtroy themſelves by exceſſive Debauches! Or, by a long Courſe of Irregularities, lay a Train of natural Diſpoſitions, whence Apoplexies, or other immediate Cauſes of ſudden Deaths, are gradually formed?

But let us ſuppoſe the Strength of their natural Conſtitution renders them Proof againſt Accidents of that Nature, (of which however no Man can be ſure) what Shelter have they againſt Misfortunes that may ſurpriſe them from abroad? If they ſay they are upon as good a Footing as the reſt of Mankind, this is a great Miſtake, unleſs they mean that Part of Mankind which is as bad as themſelves. Pious Chriſtians are under the ſpecial Protection of Almighty God, and if they die ſuddenly, Death renders them eternally happy; to both which Advantages ill Livers have forfeited their Title. They are God's Enemies, and, as they have with-drawn themſelves from the Order eſtabliſhed by his Holy Law, ſo he withdraws from them the Benefit of that peculiar Providence,

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with which he watches over his obedient Servants. So that when the Time is come, in which he deſigns to make any of them Examples of his Juſtice, he abandons them to their unhappy Deſtiny. He neither keeps Danger at a Diſtance from them, nor removes them out of the Reach of Danger. And tho' in all this there appears nothing out of the ordinary Courſe of Nature, yet the Execution of theſe Criminals is as particularly ordered by the Divine Juſtice, as if the Hand of God appeared viſibly in it: His infinite Wiſdom diſpoſing natural Cauſes in ſuch a Manner as to give them an infallible Tendency to the End for which they are deſigned. But whatever Name we give to ſudden Deaths of this Nature, whether we call them *Accidents* or *Judgments*, according as they have a Reference to ſeveral Cauſes, they are equally fatal in their Conſequence, and the Puniſhment is equally ſevere, whether it be immediately inflicted by the Hand of God, or occaſioned by what we call *Chance*, becauſe eternal Death is the infallible Conſequence of it.

However, that there may be no room left to doubt, but that the ſudden Death of Sinners may be regarded as a deſign'd Puniſhment of their ill Lives, the Word of God threatens them expreſsly with it, as is manifeſt

manifeſt from St. *Paul*'s Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, Chap. v. ver. 3. where he tells them, *that Death ſhall ſeize upon the Wicked like a Thief in the Night: and when they ſhall ſay Peace and Safety, then ſudden Deſtruction ſhall come upon them, as Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they ſhall not eſcape.* And our Saviour ſays no leſs in the twenty-fourth Chapter of St. *Matthew*; where having exhorted his Diſciples to be watchful, he propoſes to them the Parable of the good and wicked Servant, which he concludes with theſe remarkable Words: *But if the evil Servant ſhall ſay in his Heart, my Lord delays his Coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his Fellow-ſervants, and eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that Servant ſhall come in the Day when he looks not for it, and in the Hour that he is not aware of; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites, where there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* From which Words it plainly appears, that ſudden Deaths ought many times to be conſidered not barely as the Effect of Chance or Conſtitution, but as a particular Puniſhment of Sin, and a juſt Revenge upon Sinners; God in his ſecret Judgments ordering it ſo, that they, who in the Courſe of their Lives neglected

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the ordinary Means to diſpoſe themſelves for Death, ſhould in the End want the Opportunity and Benefit of a particular Preparation for it.

But, O good God! what Tongue is able to expreſs the fatal Conſequences of ſuch a Death! What becomes of a Soul charged with the Guilt of mortal Sin at the Moment of her Separation from the Body! She is hurried in an Inſtant to the dreadful Tribunal, receives her irrevocable Doom, is baniſhed from the Sight of God, and plunged into Hell-fire; where Shame and Deſpair, Horror and Confuſion, Remorſe without Eaſe, and Torments without Comfort, are to be her everlaſting Portion.

O God, preſerve us from this Misfortune. Let any but that which is irreparable happen to us. Enable us with thy Grace to live ſo, that we may die the Death of the Juſt; and conduct us thro' whatever Ways thou pleaſeſt, ſo they but bring us to the happy End for which we are created.

The Fourth Entertainment.

Some practical Inferences drawn from the Uncertainty of Human Life, and the Danger of ſudden Deaths.

Be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour, Matt. xxv. 13.

HAVING in my laſt Diſcourſe laid before you the Uncertainty of Human Life, the weak Foundation upon which it is built, how many Accidents may rob us of it, and, what is moſt frightful, how little Security we have that it will not be ſnatch'd from us by a ſudden Death; it remains now to improve theſe Truths, by drawing ſome inſtructive Inferences from them, which ſhall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

The firſt inſtructive Inference to be drawn from the Uncertainty of Human Life is, that we ought not to ſet our Hearts upon any Thing in this World. For is it not a Folly to ſet our Hearts upon Things which Death may rob us of every Moment, and will certainly take away from us ſome time or other? 'Tis the Argument our Saviour made uſe of to his Diſciples,

Diſciples, to wean their Hearts from the World, and turn their Affections towards Heaven. *Lay not up Treaſures* (ſays Chriſt) *for yourſelves upon Earth, where the Moth and the Worm does corrupt, and where Thieves break in and ſteal.* For what wiſe Man would be ſolicitous to lay up Treaſures, or ſet his Heart upon them, if he were ſure they were all to become a Prey to Thieves? Now Death is the great Thief, who always lies in wait for us, and will ſooner or later rifle all our worldly Goods, and ſtrip us naked of whatever we poſſeſs. For we muſt all go as naked out of the World, as we firſt entered into it. Honours, Riches, Pleaſures, Friends and Relations, all muſt be left behind; only our Works, whether good or bad, will ſtick to us, and accompany us to the Tribunal of God, either to condemn or ſave us. So that the whole World periſhes as effectually to every dying Man, as if it were at that Inſtant reduced to Aſhes. And is it not then a notorious Folly to ſet our Hearts upon it, or love any Thing in it to the Prejudice of our eternal Salvation?

For this Reaſon St. *Paul* writes thus to the *Corinthians*; *This therefore, Brethren, I ſay unto you, Time is ſhort. It remains then that both thoſe, who have Wives, be as if they had them not; and thoſe who weep,*

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be as if they wept not; and thoſe who rejoice, be as if they rejoiced not; and thoſe who buy, be as if they poſſeſſed not; and thoſe who uſe this World, be as if they uſed it not; for the Figure of this World paſſes, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. By which Words he exhorts them to keep their Hearts ſo free and diſengaged from all inordinate Affections to the Things of this Life, that even amidſt the Poſſeſſion and Uſe of them, they may enjoy the ſame Liberty of Spirit, as if they had effectually renounced both the one and the other.

For the ſame Reaſon St. *Peter* exhorts all Chriſtians to be as *Pilgrims* or *Travellers* in this World; becauſe as Travellers, tho' they make uſe of the Conveniencies they meet with upon the Road, yet have always principally an Eye upon the propoſed End of their Journey, ſo Chriſtians ought to have their Thoughts ſo turn'd towards Death, and the World to come, which is the End of their Journey, that whilſt they uſe indeed the Things of this Life, according to the Order of Providence, that is, within the Bounds of Neceſſity or reaſonable Convenience, their Hearts may ſtill remain free, or, as St. *Peter* expreſſes it, *abſtain from fleſhly Luſts*, that is, from all Sorts of inordinate Love, or immoderate Deſire of Creatures. And truly, ſince

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all inordinate Affections are contrary to the Chriſtian Spirit, and an Obſtacle to Salvation, this alone ought to be Motive enough to keep our Hearts free from them. But the Difficulties they will one Day add to the natural Terrors of Death, is a no leſs powerful Conſideration to make us apply ourſelves to an entire Diſengagement from all Clogs of this Nature. To die, is in itſelf a terrible Thing, Nature ſtartles at the Thought of it, and the Fear of Judgment very much increaſes its Terror; but to die with a Heart full of the Love of the World is frightful beyond Imagination.

This appeared plainly in the unfortunate *Agag*, who having wallow'd in all the Pleaſures of a voluptuous Life, when he ſaw himſelf juſt ready to fall a Sacrifice to the Divine Vengeance, cried out with the deepeſt Anguiſh of Mind, *Does bitter Death ſeparate ſo?* For what a racking Thought muſt it needs be to a Lover of this World, when ſeeing himſelf at the Point of Death, he conſiders that he muſt now be in a Moment torn away from all thoſe Things, in which he has till then placed all his Happineſs, Content, and Satisfaction! He has till then been paſſionately fond of Pleaſures, and now he muſt enjoy them no more. He has ſet his Heart upon

upon Riches, and now he muſt leave all behind. He has made ſome wretched Creature the Idol of his Paſſion, and now he finds himſelf condemned to an eternal Separation from that Object. O! could we but ſee the Heart of a Perſon dying under theſe unhappy Circumſtances, we ſhould there diſcover a frightful Scene of Terror, Grief, and Anguiſh. We ſhould find there fully verified this Saying of Eccl. *O Death, how bitter is thy Memory to a Man, who places his Content in the Enjoyment of his Wealth!* So that to entertain or nouriſh in ourſelves any worldly Paſſion, or violent Inclination, is in the effect to nouriſh a Viper, which will one Day gnaw our very Bowels. 'Tis to prepare the Torture for ourſelves, and ſow the Seeds of future Dejection and Deſpair: which, tho' ſtifled amidſt the Buſineſs, Amuſements, and Diverſions of Life, will not fail to produce their full Effect at the terrible Approach of Death. And therefore ſince we are uncertain how near we are already to it, we ought to loſe no Time, but haſten all we can to remove from our Hearts all ſuch inordinate Affections, as are moſt like to increaſe the Difficulties of our laſt Hour, and heighten the Terrors which Death brings naturally with it: And this, as I have ſaid, is the firſt practical

Inference to be drawn from the Uncertainty of human Life.

The Second is, that we ought to ſet a great Value upon the Time preſent, and manage it with the utmoſt Care. For ſince Time is given us by God for the gaining of Eternity, it follows, that if we but manage it as we ought, we may improve it into an infinite Good, becauſe an infinite Good may be purchaſed with it: and this ſuffices to ſhew it is a Treaſure of ineſtimable Value. But if we farther conſider that the Poſſeſſion of this ineſtimable Treaſure is wholly uncertain, and cannot be ſecured to us by any Power under Heaven, even for one ſingle Day, as being liable to all the Accidents to which Man's Life is expoſed; 'tis plain we cannot, without manifeſt Folly, and the Hazard of loſing all, neglect the Improvement of thoſe precious Moments, whereof we are actually in poſſeſſion. For if we eſteem thoſe little better than Fools, who wilfully let ſlip an Opportunity of any conſiderable temporal Advantage, becauſe the like may perhaps never be offered again; how great a Folly muſt we then judge thoſe guilty of, who having it in their Power to lay up Treaſures for Eternity, either trifle away the Opportunity that is given them, or employ it to their own infinite Prejudice, when at the

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ſame time they are not only uncertain how ſoon it may be taken from them; but are alſo ſure, that when 'tis once loſt, 'tis never more to be recovered! This certainly is a Folly not to be parallel'd, and as far beyond all Example now, as the fatal Conſequences of it will be without Remedy hereafter. Oh! what a ſtabbing Thought is it to the damn'd Souls in Hell to reflect that *Time will be no more!* A thouſand Daggers wound not half ſo ſenſibly as this one ſingle Thought. 'Tis the everlaſting *Worm*, that gnaws them without Intermiſſion, and gives a double Sting to all their Torments.

Conſider therefore that Time, if it be managed as it ought, is the richeſt Jewel we poſſeſs; that the Continuance of it is wholly uncertain; that at beſt we cannot hold it very long, and when it is once loſt, it is loſt for ever. Whence we muſt conclude, according to my ſecond Inference, that as the Time preſent, of which alone we are ſecure, challenges our higheſt Value, ſo we ought to manage it to the beſt Advantage of our Souls, both in order to redeem as well as we can what is yet to come, as to make it fully anſwer all the great Ends, for which it is beſtow'd upon us.

But ſince Life is not only uncertain, but may alſo end in a ſudden Death, there remains a third Inference to be drawn particularly from this Conſideration, and 'tis our Saviour's own Inference contain'd in theſe Words, *be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.* We ought therefore to be ſo watchful over ourſelves, as never to be unprovided. For tho' there be no Fence againſt a ſudden Death, yet every Chriſtian may ſecure himſelf againſt an unprovided one, ſince every one has it in his Power to live ſo, as to be always prepared; whereas, if he be at any Time unprepared, he expoſes himſelf to all the fatal Conſequences of a ſudden Death, becauſe it may happen to him, whilſt he is in that Condition. For which Reaſon our bleſſed Saviour, as he frequently forewarned his Diſciples of the Suddenneſs of his future Coming, repreſenting it under diverſe Parables or Similitudes, to imprint the more lively Ideas of it in their Hearts, ſo he generally concluded his Diſcourſes relating to that Subject with this Admonition, *be therefore watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.*

Who would not think indeed, but that ſo expreſs an Admonition, delivered by Chriſt himſelf, nay, and inculcated with ſuch frequent Repetitions, ſhould abundantly

dantly ſuffice to cure Men of the deepeſt Lethargy, and awake them into the greateſt Care and Watchfulneſs over themſelves? conſidering eſpecially the dreadful Miſchiefs that attend the Neglect of it. But, alas, the Caſe is quite otherwiſe; for is there any thing more directly oppoſite to the Watchfulneſs required of us than the State of mortal Sin! wherein whoever dies is loſt without Remedy. And yet how many continue in this unhappy State wittingly and knowingly, I will not ſay for many Days, Weeks, or Months, but even Years together! Nay, are they not as gay and unconcern'd under it, as if every Thing were as ſafe and well as they could wiſh? O God, what a Blindneſs and Infatuation is this! that Men, who believe there is another World to come, wherein the Juſt will be eternally rewarded, and the Wicked eternally puniſhed, ſhould have the Boldneſs to hazard themſelves in a State, from which, if Death ſhould ſeize them in it, they muſt immediately paſs to everlaſting Torments!

What is it that makes Men run thus deſperately upon their own eternal Ruin? How comes this Contradiction in their Nature, that being ſuch Lovers of themſelves, they are at the ſame time ſuch Enemies to their own true Happineſs? How

comes it that, hating and flying above all Things whatever is painful, they are not aw'd with the Fear of *Hell-fire?* Is it the Hopes of atoning for all by a future Repentance? Alas, how many have been deceived and utterly loſt that Way? How many have we either perſonally known or heard of, who depending upon the like preſumptuous Hope, have at length been either hardened in Sin before they came to die, or ſuddenly cut off in the midſt of all their Diſorders? For truly to run on in a wilful Courſe of Sin upon a Project of making all Scores clear by an After-Repentance, looks ſo like laying a Deſign to baffle the Divine Juſtice, and get Heaven by a Cheat, that God ſeems, as it were, bound in Honour to defeat the wicked Policy of ſuch inſolent Sinner, by diſappointing their Preſumption, and refuſing them the Mercy, which they abuſed into an Encouragement to Sin.

The Book of *Judges* furniſhes me with an hiſtorical Paſſage, very applicable to my preſent Purpoſe. 'Tis the Relation of the tragical End of *Siſara* King *Jabin*'s General, who having been for about twenty Years the Scourge of God upon the *Iſraelites*, was marching againſt them at the Head of a formidable Army. The *Iſraelites*, in this their Diſtreſs, had recourſe

to

to God's Mercy; who hearing their Prayers, ordered them to meet their Enemy with a Body of ten thouſand Men under the Command of *Barach*.

Siſara, whoſe Army was much ſuperior in Number, and fluſh'd with a long Courſe of proſperous Succeſs, reckoned ſecurely upon the Victory. But he found his Death where he thought to meet a Triumph. For the Battle was no ſooner begun, but God ſtruck his whole Army with a panick Fear and general Conſternation; inſomuch that *Siſara* himſelf, being alſo ſeized with Terror, betook himſelf to flight, whilſt the *Iſraelites* broke in upon and deſtroyed his whole Army.

As *Siſara* was thus endeavouring to ſave himſelf by Flight, a Woman named *Jahel* offered him her Houſe for Sanctuary, which he willingly accepted of; for here he thought himſelf out of Danger. Wherefore being much fatigued he deſired ſome Refreſhment, drank heartily, and laid himſelf down to ſleep. But it coſt him very dear. For *Jahel* perceiving him faſt aſleep, ſtruck a Nail through his Head, faſtened him to the Ground, and delivered up his Body to *Barach*, who was in purſuit of him.

This is a lively Figure of the unhappy End of but too many Sinners. They are

God's Enemies, and, as I may ſay, at open War againſt him; he permits them to proſper in this Life, and his Patience and long Forbearance, inſtead of moving them to Repentance, makes them grow inſolent, and flatter themſelves with a falſe Security; in this Condition they *drink Iniquity like Water*; they fall into a lethargick Sleep, and their Hearts are, as it were, nail'd to the Earth. God's Wrath is in the mean time in cloſe purſuit of them; Death ſuddenly overtakes them, and delivers them up to the Divine Juſtice. And ſo theſe miſerable Wretches are at length awakened by the ſcorching Flames of Hell, whom neither the Advice of Friends or ghoſtly Father, nor God's ſecret Inſpirations, nor the loud Thunder of his Threats could awake, whilſt they were yet in a Condition to prevent the fatal Blow by a timely Repentance.

Oh! let their Misfortune be at leaſt a Warning to us. Let their paſt Follies be our Inſtruction. 'Tis better to grow wiſe at the Expence of others, than by our own Experience. Nay, if we ſhould tread in their Footſteps, and miſcarry the ſame Way, our Folly will be the more unpardonable in ſuffering ourſelves to be ſhipwrack'd upon a Rock, which has already ſo many Marks ſet upon it. Oh! if any

of

of thoſe miſerable Souls, who are now burning in the Flames of Hell, could but obtain with all their Tears and bitter Sufferings, the bare Remainder of this very Day, what Price, what Value would they ſet upon it! How ſolicitous would they be not to let one Moment of it ſlip unprofitably out of their Hands! And why then will we not reſolve to take the ſame Method? Why will any one be ſo bent upon his own Deſtruction, as to run on blindly in a Courſe, which brought them, and will at length bring him to everlaſting Miſery and Torments? For ſince the ſame Means tend naturally to the ſelf-ſame End, can any one pretend to act the ſame unhappy Part as they did, and be in no danger of being involved in the ſame Misfortune? Can he preſume to go to Heaven, by walking in that Path which brought them to Hell? Or has he Power of Life and Death more in his Hands than they had? Is he not liable to the ſame Accidents as they, and may not Death ſurpriſe him, as it did them?

You will ſay, perhaps, 'tis true, it is not impoſſible but you may die ſuddenly: However, ſince this happens but to few, 'tis more probable you will have Warning to prepare yourſelves beforehand. But do we argue at this wild Rate, when any

temporal Concern is at ſtake? You all know very well, that in ſecuring Land or Money, all Accidents poſſible are nicely conſider'd, and the very ſame Meaſures and Precautions taken, as if it were certain that they would happen. And why then ſhould we be leſs cautious in the Buſineſs of our eternal Salvation! Why will we put it to any Hazard at all, when we have it in our Power to ſecure it abſolutely! For allowing it to be leſs probable, 'tis poſſible, at leaſt, we may die ſuddenly. And is not that enough, conſidering what lies at Stake! Is not that, I ſay, enough to oblige us to take the ſafeſt Courſe we can to prevent the fatal Conſequences of it in caſe it ſhould happen! For whatever is poſſible, tho' barely poſſible, may abſolutely happen; and if it ſhould happen whilſt we are in Sin, let us reflect ſeriouſly what the Conſequence will be: Becauſe if what we hazard by being in the State of Sin were either of ſmall Moment, or being once loſt might be again recovered, the Caſe would be much altered. But we muſt conſider, that the Thing we expoſe to doubtful Chance, being in that State, is not only of the higheſt Value imaginable, and ſurpaſſes infinitely all the Treaſures of this World, but if we once loſe it, the Loſs is irreparable; nay, over and above,

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the Miſeries we hazard to throw ourſelves into, are inexpreſſible and without Remedy. And therefore of whatever Nature the Chance may be, that can bring ſuch a Misfortune upon us, whether probable, or barely poſſible, 'tis a Madneſs to be ever unprepared for it.

I ſhall therefore repeat once more the important Admonition of Chriſt, which we muſt conſider as addreſs'd to ourſelves; *Be watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.* Let no Man depend either upon Youth or Health; for neither Youth nor Health can afford any Security againſt the Stroke of Death. We may be in perfect Health to-day, and dead to-morrow. Nay, many thouſands have been in perfect Health the very Hour or Moment before they fell into Hell-Fire. But if we deſire an infallible Security againſt all Poſſibility of being ſurpriſed by Death, nothing can procure us that Happineſs but a well-ordered Conſcience, and the Friendſhip of Almighty God. For whoever enjoys that Bleſſing, may indeed die ſuddenly, but cannot be ſurpriſed by Death, as being always in a Readineſs for it.

The

The Fifth Entertainment.

Difficulties attending a Death-bed Repentance.

Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and put it not off from Day to Day, Eccleſ. v. 8.

FROM what has hitherto been ſaid concerning the Uncertainty of the Time and other Circumſtances of Death on the one hand, and the many Dangers and ſudden Accidents to which we live expoſed on the other, it appears plainly that they, who continue in a Cuſtom of living in a ſinful State, run a very great Hazard either of dying without any Preparation at all, or at the beſt of being reduced to the laſt ſhift of depending wholly upon that Preparation which their laſt Sickneſs will allow them, and which we uſually call a *Death-bed Repentance*; which being generally look'd upon as a moſt dangerous After-game in a Concern of the higheſt Nature, ſhews the Importance of the Advice dictated by the Holy Ghoſt in theſe ſacred Words, *Delay not to be converted*

verted to the Lord, and put it not off from Day to Day.

Here then is the proper Place to examine, what Judgment we ought to make of the Repentance of a dying Man; that is, whether a Perſon, who has neglected the Means of Salvation in time of Health, and run on in a Courſe of ſinful Practices till he falls into his laſt Sickneſs, be then in any tolerable Condition to accompliſh the great Work of a ſincere Reconciliation to God.

However, I am far from intending either to extenuate the Power of God's *Grace*, or ſet Bounds to his *Mercy*. For I know that neither the one nor the other are to be meaſured by our ſhort Line. His *Grace* can change the moſt corrupt Heart in an Inſtant, and his *Mercy* never rejects a Heart truly changed. And for that Reaſon the moſt profligate Sinner upon Earth, tho' reduced to the very laſt Extremity, ought never to deſpair. Becauſe he knows not but the ſame infinite Goodneſs that received a Thief at the laſt Gaſp into Favour, may alſo be moved to have Compaſſion on him in that Extremity.

The Queſtion therefore is not, whether a Perſon, reduced to theſe unhappy Circumſtances, is bound to hope in God's Mercies, and do what he can to be reconciled

ciled to him; for this admits of no diſpute; becauſe, tho' he has lived an Unchriſtian Life, he is bound to do his beſt to prepare himſelf for a Chriſtian Death. But ſince the Preparation for ſuch a Death cannot be without a ſincere *Love of God*, and a true *Hatred of Sin*, both which muſt be the Effect of *Grace*, the whole Queſtion is reduced to this one ſingle Point, *viz.* whether a Perſon, who has always lived a Stranger to the Virtues of *Repentance*, and the *Love of God*, and been accuſtomed for many Years to reſiſt the Motions of Grace, will in his laſt Sickneſs be favoured with ſuch an extraordinary Aſſiſtance, as will enable him in that State of Terror, Pain, and Anguiſh, to work a total Change in the Diſpoſition of his Soul.

'Tis very true, the Thing is not impoſſible, becauſe no Wound is incurable to the omnipotent Hand of God, and therefore ought not to be deſpaired of by the unfortunate Party, who has run the Hazard of it. But as it is a heinous Crime to deſpair at any time of God's Mercy, ſo it is the higheſt Strain of Madneſs in any Perſon to lay before-hand a Deſign of depending upon an extraordinary Grace, and reduce himſelf to a State, in which nothing under ſuch a Bleſſing can ſave him. My Buſineſs then at preſent is to ſhew, that a

Death-

Death-bed Converſion after a ſinful Life continued to a Perſon's laſt Sickneſs, is nothing leſs than the Effect of an extraordinary Grace; and by Conſequence not to be depended upon.

To make it appear that the Converſion of a Sinner upon his Death-bed is the Effect of an extraordinary Grace, it will be requiſite to let you know what I mean by an extraordinary Grace. I ſay then that an extraordinary Grace is that which is beſtowed without the Uſe of the ordinary Means ordained by God for the obtaining of it; becauſe, tho' all Grace whatſoever be a pure Gift of God, he rarely beſtows the Grace of a total and ſincere Converſion but on thoſe who employ the Means ordained by him to diſpoſe themſelves for it. So that when a Sinner is converted without the previous Uſe of thoſe Means, his Converſion is extraordinary, and by conſequence the Effect of an extraordinary Grace.

Now then to ſhew that a Death-bed Repentance is a Converſion of this Kind, we muſt examine two Things; 1. What are the ordinary Means of a Sinner's Converſion. And, 2. Whether a dying Man be in a Condition to put theſe Means in Practice; for if he be not, 'tis evident he has nothing but an extraordinary Grace to depend

depend upon. As to the ordinary Means of a Sinner's Converſion, they are moſtly reduced under theſe four Heads, of *Prayer*, *ſpiritual Reading*, *Conſideration*, and the Uſe of the *Sacraments*. For let us ſuppoſe a Perſon yet in perfect Health, ſhould, after having lived in an habitual Practice of Vice, apply himſelf to a Spiritual Director, to conſult with him about the Means of ſaving his Soul, what Method would he adviſe him to? It is not to be doubted but he would in the *firſt* Place exhort him to retire for ſome Time, at leaſt as much as would be poſſible, from Company and worldly Buſineſs, in order to get Leiſure and Opportunity to pour forth his Soul before God in the Exerciſe of *Prayer*. 2*dly*, He would adviſe him to join frequent *Conſideration* with ſpiritual Reading; and all this by way of a preparatory Exerciſe, to work him by degrees into a hearty Deteſtation of this Life paſt, and diſpoſe him for the Benefit of the *Sacraments*.

And to ſhew how neceſſary it is to uſe this Method in the Caſe ſuppoſed, we need but compare the Condition of a Soul corrupted with a long Habit of Sin, with that of a Perſon labouring under an ill Habit of Body. For as in this Caſe no skilful Phyſician will pretend to cure the Party con-

concern'd with a Doſe or two, but will oblige him to enter into a regular Courſe of Phyſick, and preſcribe him a uniform Method of Exerciſe and Diet, by Means whereof the whole Maſs of Blood may by Degrees be corrected, and the Cauſe of the Diſtemper removed, ſo in the Caſe of a Soul all over vitiated with Sin, a few Doſes of ſpiritual Phyſick will profit but little; but a Continuance and regular Courſe of Remedies is neceſſary.

'Tis true, if the Sacraments work'd their Effect without any previous Diſpoſitions on the Part of the Penitent, a few Minutes would do as well as many Months or Years: For then whoever had but Time enough to confeſs, and have his Abſolution pronounced before the Breath went out of his Body, woud die in the State of Salvation. But the Caſe is quite otherwiſe. There are preparatory Diſpoſitions eſſentially neceſſary to qualify the Penitent for the Grace of the Sacraments. For the Heart muſt be truly changed, and the Will effectually turned from the irregular *Love of Creatures* to the *Love of God* above all Things.

Now this is a difficult Work, and requires both Time and Application more or leſs in Proportion to the Malignity of the Diſtemper, and the Root it has taken.

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For Grace works by Degrees like Nature, and as it uſually hides itſelf under the Operation of mere natural Cauſes, ſo it conforms itſelf for the moſt Part to their Way of Operating, and ſeldom brings any thing to Perfection on a ſudden. And therefore when God Almighty mercifully deſigns to recover an old Sinner from the ill State he is in, the firſt Diſpoſition he uſually forms towards it is to inſpire him with an earneſt Deſire of his Cure; becauſe the Deſire of any Good naturally ſpurs us on to procure the Means in Order to it. But tho' this Deſire, which is the firſt Step towards a Sinner's Converſion, be never ſo hearty, 'tis uſually very imperfect for ſome Time as to its Motive; being for the moſt part wholly influenced at firſt by mere ſelfiſh Conſiderations, ſuch as are the Uneaſineſs of a troubled Conſcience, the Apprehenſion of God's Judgment, the Fear of Hell-fire, and the like: And all this may be without any *Hatred of Sin* for its own Sake, that is, purely as it is an *Offence of God.*

However, Almighty God makes uſe of this ſervile Fear in order to alarm him into a Concern and Solicitude about the Means to ſhake off the Burden that oppreſſes him, and prevent the Evils wherewith he is threaten'd. This Concern and Solicitude about

about the Means of his Cure obliges him to have Recourſe to his ſpiritual Phyſician, and follow his Directions as to the Method of Praying, Reading, Meditating, and the like. By often Reading and Thinking upon Chriſtian Truths, lively Ideas of them are inſenſibly form'd, and deeply fix'd in his Mind: His Underſtanding receives daily new Light: His Eyes are open'd by Degrees, and begin to ſee the Vanity of worldly Pleaſures; the Grievouſneſs and Enormity of Sin; the infinite Goodneſs of God; his Love in having ſent his only Son to deliver him from the Bondage of Sin and Slavery of the Devil; his unwearied Patience in having borne ſo long with him, and unſpeakable Mercy in not having cut him off in the midſt of his Diſorders, but ſtill inviting him to Repentance.

Theſe Conſiderations, as they ſink deeper and deeper into his Mind, work proportionably upon the Will: His Heart is affected with them, and takes a new Bent. The Love of the World and its ſinful Pleaſures goes off inſenſibly, and a better Love enters in by the ſame Degrees. What was at firſt begun upon Motives of mere ſervile Fear, he now carries on upon higher Conſiderations. His Heart is ſoften'd into Compunction, his Soul is ſenſibly afflicted with

with the Thought of having lived ſo long an Enemy to God: He laments his Miſfortune in having ſo often offended his infinite Goodneſs: He pours himſelf forth in Affections of Love, Admiration, and Thankſgiving; deteſts his paſt Sins, reſolves to avoid all the Occaſions of them, makes hearty Purpoſes of Amendment, is ready to ſubmit to any penitential Works to ſatisfy the Divine Juſtice, and with theſe happy Diſpoſitions approaches to the ſacred Tribunal, in order to receive the infinite Bleſſing of Reconciliation with his heavenly Father.

Thus we ſee what are the ordinary Means appointed by God for the beginning, improving, and perfecting the great Work of a Sinner's Converſion; and the Degrees, through which he uſually paſſes in making his Advances towards it. Now let us conſider, whether a Perſon that has neglected all theſe Means in Time of Health, and run on to his very laſt Sickneſs in all his accuſtomed Diſorders, and Habits of Sins; whether, I ſay, he be then in any tolerable Condition to put them in Practice. For if he be not, he has nothing but an extraordinary Grace to depend upon, as I have already ſaid.

And, *firſt*, as to the Duty of *Prayer*, I only deſire any one to reflect how little he

he is able to perform in that Kind, if he be but under ſome Uneaſineſs of Mind, or a little out of Order with the Head-ach, or any other trivial Indiſpoſition. And how then can we be ſo ſenſeleſs as to imagine that a Perſon ſeized with a mortal Diſtemper ſhould be capable of praying with any tolerable Attention! For what Compariſon is there between a ſlight Indiſpoſition, which only affects ſome one particular Part, and a mortal Diſtemper, which uſually puts the whole Body into a violent Ferment, and ſpreads an univerſal Uneaſineſs and Anguiſh over every Part of it. 'Tis evident, that the one muſt be by many degrees a greater Hindrance than the other to any Buſineſs that requires Thought and Preſence of Mind. And therefore ſince we find by Experience that the Infirmity of the Spirit is ſo great, that it is apt to be overcome even by the leſſer Oppoſition of the Body, there is but little Reaſon to preſume, it will have Strength enough to bear up againſt Obſtacles that are without all Compariſon greater.

But as a Perſon in his laſt Sickneſs is but in a very ill Condition to *pray* as he ought, ſo is he much leſs capable of *Reading*; the Benefit whereof, and the Influence it has upon a Sinner's Converſion, is ſufficiently known by Experience. But

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this Point is ſo clear that it needs no Proof. For to put Books into a dying Man's Hands is a Thing without Example. And here we find him under the greateſt Diſadvantage poſſible, in being deprived of one of the principal Helps to Salvation; it being this Exerciſe that ſhould furniſh him with proper Subjects for Conſideration, and ſuch Reflections, as might inſenſibly work his Soul into a truly penitential Diſpoſition, and lead him thro' all the Degrees of a ſolid Converſion.

But this, you will ſay, may in ſome meaſure be ſupplied by others reading to him. I own ſomething of this may be allowed; but then how many Hindrances are uſually intervening in a Perſon's laſt Sickneſs to obſtruct the Fruit of it! As frequent Viſits of Friends, the Attendance and Tears of Relations about the ſick Man's Bed, which uſually affect him more ſenſibly than the moſt moving ſpiritual Lectures. Then Doctors and Apothecaries muſt frequently be ſent for; and the Nurſe is every now and then buſy about him, and telling you that too much Reading may hurt his Head, or hinder his Repoſe, and the like. So that in the winding up of the Bottom, all the Reading to help him with will amount to no more than ſome unconnected Scraps of ſpiritual Lectures; which

which tho' not altogether unuſeful to ſuch pious Souls as only ſtand in need of ſome little Helps to ſtir up their Hearts already well diſpoſed, and revive the pious Ideas that have ever been familiar to them, will, I fear, prove to be of very little uſe to thoſe, who are yet full of worldly Paſſions, all over corrupted with Habits of Sin, and ſtand in need of the moſt powerful Remedies to work an effectual Cure.

However, ſuppoſe the Hindrances from abroad ſhould not be ſo great as they are here repreſented, are not the Pains of a dying Man alone ſufficient to hinder him from receiving any conſiderable Impreſſion from what is ſaid or read to him at that time? For how ſhould he receive Impreſſions from what he cannot attend to? Or how ſhould he be capable of any ſerious Attention, when all his Thoughts are forcibly drawn another Way? Now is not this the Caſe of thoſe who are under any violent Pain? 'Tis doubtleſs ſo. For it is the proper Nature of Pain to divert the Soul from all other Objects, and draw her whole Application to itſelf. Hence it is that *Praying*, *Reading*, and *Meditating* are Exerciſes that cannot be well performed, but when the Body is in ſome Meaſure at eaſe; becauſe all theſe Exerciſes require a Compoſure and Preſence of Mind; and nothing

nothing affects the Mind more immediately either for its Advantage or Diſadvantage, than the Diſpoſition of the Body; ſo that if the Body be diſturbed with Pains, it immediately communicates its Diſturbance to the Mind; and a Mind diſturbed can ſcarce think of any thing but the Cauſe of its Diſturbance.

Now then ſince it is evident, that the Circumſtances of a dying Man are ſuch, as unqualify him in a great Meaſure for all the preparatory Exerciſes, that are the ordinary Means to diſpoſe him for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, does it not manifeſtly follow, that the Converſion of a Sinner under theſe unhappy Circumſtances, can be nothing leſs than the Effect of an extraordinary Grace? The Conſequence is clear and undeniable. Becauſe, where ordinary Means fail, nothing but an extraordinary Power can ſupply the Defect. And I leave you now to judge, whether a Sinner has any Reaſon to preſume beforehand, that God will in his laſt Extremity favour him with a Converſion of that Nature.

The Word of God has fore-warned us not to depend upon it. I ſhall only quote St. *Paul*, who, writing to the *Corinthians*, lays down this general Maxim, *That the End of Sinners will be according to their Works.*

Works. He repeats it again in his Epiſtle to the *Galatians* vi. where he tells them, that every Man ſhall *reap* as he has *ſown.* Which imports the ſame Thing, nay expreſſes it in a moſt ſignificant Metapho·. *Be not deceived,* ſays he, *God is not mocked. What a Man ſoweth, that alſo ſhall he reap. He that ſoweth in his Fleſh, ſhall reap Corruption; but he that ſoweth in the Spirit ſhall reap Life everlaſting,* Gal. vi. 6, 7. So that according to this Rule of St. *Paul,* Men generally die as they lived; and there is but too much Reaſon to judge of the Succeſs of the one by the Method of the other.

'Tis true, there is ſcarce any general Rule without an Exception. But the whole Body of the Old and New Teſtament affords but one ſingle Inſtance, that looks favourably upon Death-bed Penitents, I mean, the Converſion of the Thief upon the Croſs; which was doubtleſs the Effect of an extraordinary Grace. And St. *Auſtin,* to prevent all Preſumption on that Score, has marked out ſo many material Circumſtances, which favoured the Converſion of that happy Sinner, and are altogether foreign to the Caſe before us, that is, of thoſe who drive off their Repentance in hopes of the like Mercy; that I fear the

Example will afford them but little Encouragement. His Words are theſe:

" Dearly beloved, leſt perhaps the " ſudden Happineſs of the believing Thief " on the Croſs ſhould make any of you " too ſecure and remiſs; leſt any one " ſhould ſay in his Heart, my guilty Con- " ſcience ſhall not trouble me; my ſinful " Life ſhall not make me ſad, becauſe I " ſee a Thief obtain'd the Pardon of all his " Sins in a Moment: we muſt conſider in " that Thief not barely the Shortneſs of " his Faith and Confeſſion, but the Great- " neſs of his Fervour, and the Circum- " ſtances of Time, when even the perfect- " eſt were ſtaggering.—The Devil in- " ſpires you with this Security to bring " you to ruin. For he deceives himſelf, " and makes a Jeſt of his own Damna- " tion, who, perſiſting in Sin, imagines " God will help him in his laſt Extremity. " —The happy Thief, of whom I have " ſpoken, neither deſignedly ſtaved off " from Time to Time the Buſineſs of " Salvation, nor fraudulently forecaſted the " laſt Moments of his Life for the Cure " of his Soul; nor reſolved beforehand to " hazard all his Hopes upon one deſpe- " rate Caſt at the Hour of Death; nei- " ther had he any Knowledge of Religion, " or of Chriſt, before that Time: For had

" he

" he had any, it is probable he would have " been amongſt the firſt of the Apoſtles, " who was firſt in the Kingdom of Hea- " ven."

Thus St. *Auſtin*; and we may gather clearly from his Words, what his Thoughts were of Death-bed Penitents, ſince he will not allow them to be upon equal Footing with one, whoſe Life had been notoriouſly ſcandalous, and whoſe Converſion was undoubtedly the Effect of an extraordinary Grace. But let that be as it will, 'tis certain that an extraordinary Event is no Precedent in any Caſe whatſoever. For who would, for Example, be ſo mad as to throw himſelf into the Sea, becauſe ſome few have in the like Danger been preſerved from Drowning? or leap into the Fire, becauſe ſome have eſcaped without being burnt? As therefore theſe extraordinary Deliverances are no Encouragement to any one to venture his Life upon the bare Hopes of ſuch a Preſervation, ſo neither ought the Example of the good Thief to embolden any one to hazard the eternal Life of his Soul, upon the Hopes that an extraordinary Grace will come in to his Aſſiſtance in his laſt Extremity.

Let us therefore all reſolve to put in Practice this excellent Advice of the pious *Thomas à Kempis*; *Do now, my deareſt*

Brother, do now whatever thou art able to do. Now, whilſt thou art in perfect Health; now, whilſt the Sun of Grace and Mercy ſhines yet bright upon thee, *for the Night cometh, when no Man can work*, John ix. 4. 'Tis well, if in our laſt Sickneſs we ſhall be able to maintain the Ground we got whilſt we were in Health. 'Tis well, if we can then ſupport ourſelves under all the Trials incident to that Condition by the Stock of Virtue we have laid up beforehand. But let us never flatter ourſelves with vain and groundleſs Hopes of doing great Matters, at a time when we are not only of ourſelves the moſt unfit for it, but the Devil is moſt active to put all manner of Obſtacles in our Way: For he knows we are then at our laſt Caſt, upon which our eternal Happineſs depends, and will therefore employ his utmoſt Skill and Malice to procure our Ruin.

Say not that Repentance never comes too late; for, tho' it be beyond all Queſtion that true Repentance is never too late, yet a late Repentance, as St. *Auſtin* tells us, is ſeldom a true one. Becauſe tis much to be ſuſpected, that meer ſervile Fear, or Self-love, has a greater Share in the Motive of it than the Love of God. 'Tis to be feared, that ſuch a Repentance is like the Trouble and Remorſe of a Malefactor led

led to Execution, who is ſorry for having followed a Courſe of Life, which has brought him to an untimely and ſhameful End.

I heartily wiſh it may prove otherwiſe to thoſe who will have the Misfortune to put it to the Trial; and tho' in Reference to any particular Perſon, Charity obliges us to hope favourably, yet I cannot hinder my Fears from prevailing when there appears nothing but a meer Death-bed Repentance to ground my Hope upon. But when a Sinner repents, being yet in perfect Health, and applies himſelf ſeriouſly to the Methods proper for his Cure; when it is evident, he reſolves to quit Sin before the Power of ſinning is juſt ready to leave him; oh! ſuch a Repentance has a favourable Aſpect, and yields a ſolid Ground to build our Hopes upon. Such a Repentance will be a Comfort to us at the Hour of Death; as being the moſt aſſured Pledge we can have, that our heavenly Father regards us with an Eye of Mercy, and has a Bleſſing in Store for us.

The Sixth ENTERTAINMENT.

The Deceitfulneſs of a Death-bed Repentance.

God is not mocked, what a Man ſoweth that alſo ſhall he reap, Gal. vi. 6.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe I repreſented at large the Difficulties that attend a Death-bed Converſion. But ſince the ſeeming Piety and Devotion of ſome Death-bed Penitents, who after a wicked Life have in Appearance died the *Death of the Juſt*, has given a kind of Credit and Reputation to the moſt dangerous Cheat the Devil can invent to ruin Souls, it will not be amiſs to ſay ſomething concerning thoſe fair outward Appearances of Repentance, which many well-meaning Perſons, out of an Abundance of miſtaken Charity, are apt to judge too favourably of, and miſcall *dying very happily*. They ſee a poor ſick Man confeſſing and bewailing his Sins, imploring God's Mercy, and receiving the laſt Sacraments with the ſame ſenſible Marks of a truly contrite and humbled Heart, as the moſt ferverous Chriſtian could do; and conclude immediately he has made a happy

a happy End. Perhaps he has; nay, it is beyond all Queſtion, if his Repentance was hearty and ſincere. But all is not Gold, that glitters. And there is a large Difference between the Appearance and Reality, the Ceremony and Subſtance of Repentance.

'Tis true, we are allowed to have favourable Thoughts even of the moſt profligate Sinners, as long as there is any reaſonable Encouragement to ground our Hopes upon. But Charity has its Bounds, and is to be governed by Prudence as well as other Virtues. A meer Death-bed Converſion, tho' attended with Circumſtances the moſt favourable in Appearance, ought always to be ſuſpected, nay, marked as a dangerous Rock, to be avoided by all who have a ſerious Concern to ſecure their Soul's Salvation. And, tho' it may be allowed to afford ſome Degree of Hopes in favour of the Party concerned, it never ought to be magnified into an Encouragement for Sinners to hazard their eternal Intereſt upon ſo weak a Bottom. My preſent Deſign then is to lay before you the Uncertainty and Deceitfulneſs of thoſe outward Marks of Devotion and Repentance, which are apt to miſlead Men into an over-favourable Opinion of a Death-bed Converſion; and this ſhall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

I told you in my laſt Diſcourſe, that a ſolid Converſion requires a true Change of the Heart, according to the Word of God, *Be converted to me in your whole Heart.* Now the Heart is ſaid to be changed, when it changes its principal Love. As for Inſtance, when the Love of God becomes predominant, inſtead of the Love of the World and its ſinful Pleaſures, that Heart is truly changed, becauſe its prevailing Love is not the ſame it was before.

Hence it follows, *firſt*, That the Heart alone is the Seat of Repentance, becauſe it is the Seat of Love; and, *ſecondly*, That Sighs and Tears, Confeſſion of Sins, Acts of Contrition formed by Word of Mouth, and verbal Proteſtations and Purpoſes of Amendment, are but the *Surface* and *Outſide* of Repentance, and not the *Subſtance* of it: Becauſe all theſe are conſiſtent with a Heart wholly unchanged, and may have nothing but meer *Self-love*, *ſervile Fear*, or Motives *purely human*, for their Foundation; though when the Heart is truly changed, they are the uſual Marks and Effects of it.

But, becauſe Examples are often more convincing, and make a deeper Impreſſion, than the moſt ſolid Reaſons, let the Caſe of King *Antiochus*, as it is repreſented in the ſecond Book of *Maccabees*, ſerve

for

for an Inſtance of this Truth. The exorbitant Pride and Avarice of this Prince had puſh'd him on to commit all manner of Injuſtice and Barbarities upon the *Jews*: But the divine Vengeance overtook him at laſt, as he was marching in all haſte towards *Jeruſalem*, with a full Intent to lay the City in Aſhes, and maſſacre all its Inhabitants. For whilſt he was thus breathing nothing but Fire and Deſolation, he was ſuddenly ſeized with a violent Pain in his Bowels, which tortured him beyond Expreſſion; and ſoon after he received a mortal Bruiſe with a Fall from his Chariot, which ſoon reduced him to the laſt Extremity.

And here his Eyes were opened, and becoming ſenſible that the Wrath of God was kindled againſt him for his enormous Crimes, and particularly the Outrages and Inhumanities he had committed in *Jeruſalem*, he gave ſuch Marks of a ſincere Repentance, that had not the Word of God itſelf inform'd us of the Truth, we might have canonized him for an illuſtrious Penitent. For in the firſt Place he acknowledged the Hand of God in the Puniſhment inflicted on him. 2. He own'd the Juſtice of it. 3. He expreſſed an entire Submiſſion to it. 4. He implored the divine Mercy with bitter Tears, and in

order to obtain it, he promiſed to atone for his paſt Crimes in ſuch an exemplary Manner, as ſuffices to ſtrike the Reader with Aſtoniſhment. Yet, notwithſtanding all this pompous Shew and glittering Outſide of Repentance, God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, ſaw no real Change in his. For had his Heart been truly changed, and converted to God, there is no doubt but he would have found the Mercy he prayed for; whereas the Word of God pronounces upon him in this terrible Manner; *This wicked Man prayed God, of whom he was not to obtain Mercy.*

Here is a frightful Example of a Death-bed Repentance; but the chief Uſe I intend it for is to convince you, that we never ought to reckon with any poſitive Aſſurance even upon the faireſt outward Appearances of a Converſion, unleſs there be ſome other Reaſons to judge by, that they are the Effects of a ſolid Change within: Becauſe all outward Appearances are ambiguous and uncertain, and may be either unſound or ſincere, according as the Principle or Motive from whence they proceed. A Robber, for Example, that is fallen into the Hands of Juſtice, may be ſorry for the Robberies he has committed, becauſe he ſees himſelf upon the Point of ſuffering an ignominious Death. A Libertine

bertine may be very much troubled for the Life he has led, becauſe he finds himſelf ruined by it both as to Health and Eſtate. So a Woman convicted of Diſhoneſty may be very ſenſibly afflicted, becauſe ſhe has rendered herſelf infamous by it. Now all theſe are *Penitents* indeed, but they are not *Goſpel-Penitents*; becauſe their Sorrow is grounded upon no better Motive than Intereſt or Self-love; and a *Heathen*, who has never heard of Chriſtian Religion, will repent upon the ſame Score.

In like manner therefore a Sinner, who ſees himſelf at Death's Door, and upon the Brink of everlaſting Perdition, may, with the Fright of ſo dreadful a Proſpect, be eaſily ſcared into a violent Diſturbance and Anguiſh of Mind, which will outwardly produce the very ſame Effects as the moſt perfect Contrition. Becauſe a violent Fear of any Evil near at hand cannot but affect the Party concern'd with a great Regret for having through his Folly drawn it upon himſelf. And this inward Regret, from whatever Cauſe it proceeds, will naturally force Sighs, and Tears, and Lamentations from him, and make him readily lay hold of all the obvious Expedients to prevent the horrible Miſchief that threatens him. For what Wonder is it, that a Perſon juſt ready to ſink ſhould lay hold

hold of any broken Plank to ſave himſelf.

But all this fair Outſide of Repentance avails but little, when there is nothing but *ſervile Fear* at the Bottom of it. For *ſervile Fear* alone, tho' uſeful in the Beginning, can never work a thorough Change in a Sinner's Heart, nor by Conſequence diſpoſe him completely for his Reconciliation to God. There muſt be a Change of Love to qualify him for that Bleſſing, as is generally taught by ſpiritual Writers, and by none more clearly than St. *Auſtin*, who inculcates it on all Occaſions, and has laid it down as a fundamental Maxim of Chriſtian Morality, *that Love alone makes the Difference between the Children of God and the Children of the Devil.* The Meaning whereof is, that as the Love of Sin prevailing in the Heart makes us Children of the Devil, ſo the Love of Juſtice reigning in the Soul conſtitutes us Children of God. For which Reaſon St. *John* has alſo poſitively declared, that *whoever loves not, remains in Death*; and our Saviour being aſked, *What is the firſt Commandment in the Law?* anſwered, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole Heart*, &c.

Hence it follows, *firſt*, That then alone a Sinner's Heart can be ſaid to be truly changed

changed or converted, when it paſſes from the Love of the one to the Love of the other; that is, when the Love of Sin is baniſhed, and the Love of God enters into its Place. For theſe two Loves being diametrically oppoſite to one another in their very Natures, cannot ſubſiſt together, but muſt of courſe deſtroy each other.

It follows, *ſecondly*, That meer *ſervile Fear* is of itſelf inſufficient to deſtroy the Love of Sin; becauſe it implies no Hatred of it for its own Sake, and as it is an Offence to God, but meerly in regard of the Puniſhment that attends it: Which made St. *Auſtin* ſay, that whoever leaves off ſinning for the Fear of Hell-fire, *is not afraid to ſin, but to burn.* Now this was properly the Caſe of *Antiochus*, who was ſorry for his paſt Sins, not becauſe God was offended by them, but becauſe he found himſelf ſmart ſeverely for them; and therefore was not worthy to obtain the Mercy he pray'd for, though he ſhewed all the outward Marks of a ſincere Repentance. I heartily wiſh it may not be the Caſe of many Death-bed Penitents. For, though every repenting Sinner, whatever his Condition be, is under ſome Degree of Uncertainty as to the Principle or Motive he acts upon, yet, doubtleſs, there are much better and ſolider Grounds to hope

favourably of the Repentance of one in perfect Health, than of him who has deferred it to the laſt Extremity. For of the former we may confidently pronounce there appears no poſitive Reaſon to doubt but his Converſion is ſolid and ſincere; whereas of the latter we can only ſay, 'tis poſſible it may be ſo. And the Reaſon of this Difference is,

Firſt, Becauſe he that repents in time of perfect Health, renounces Sin when he has it in his Power to continue in it, and thereby ſhews that it is a free and voluntary Act, and not a forced Thing to which he is driven by meer Streſs of Fear. Whereas we may reaſonably ſuſpect that one who has held on ſinning as long as he could, and only diſcovers a Willingneſs to leave it, when he can ſin no longer, renounces it, as I may ſay, not for Want of *Will* but *Power*.

Secondly, He that reſolves upon a Change of Life, whilſt he is in perfect Health, and has yet Time before him to do Penance for his Sins, ſhews a real and ſincere Diſpoſition to it; but he that drives it off to the very laſt, and only expreſſes a Deſire to do Penance, when the Time of doing it is juſt expiring, gives Reaſon enough to ſuſpect, that were his Life to be continued

nued to him, doing Penance for his Sins would be the leaſt Part of his Buſineſs in it.

Thirdly, A Penitent in time of perfect Health has this great Advantage, that tho' his Repentance may, as it uſually happens, be influenced at firſt by meer *ſervile Fear*, he has Leiſure and Opportunity to paſs forward, and work his Soul into a better Diſpoſition, by duly applying himſelf to the Exerciſes proper to introduce the Love of God, and ſoften his Heart into a filial Compunction. And ſince God's Grace is never wanting to thoſe that are not wanting to themſelves, nor denies his Aſſiſtance where the natural Means provided by him are duly employed, a Penitent, that has laid hold of the Time and Opportunity granted him by God to put theſe Means in Practice to the beſt of his Power, has all the Reaſon in the World to hope, that the Work of his Converſion, tho' at firſt perhaps begun by Fear, is at laſt perfected by Love, and built upon a ſolid Foundation.

But the Caſe of a Death-bed Penitent is quite otherwiſe, as appears evidently from what I told you in my laſt Diſcourſe: For ſince his Circumſtances are ſuch, as render the Uſe of the forementioned holy Exerciſes almoſt utterly impracticable to him, it is very difficult to conceive by what means

means (without an extraordinary Grace) the Love of God ſhould get Entrance into his Heart, eſpecially if we conſider to what Degree it muſt needs be hardened againſt it by long Habits of Sin; for there are two Things naturally requiſite to make a rational Creature change his principal Love, *firſt*, A ſufficient Motive to induce him to it; and, *ſecondly*, A due Application of that Motive: For let a Motive be never ſo powerful in itſelf, unleſs it be duly applied, it can never affect the Heart, as every one may find by Experience.

Now give me leave to ask what Motive a Sinner can have to love God in his laſt Sickneſs more than he had all the Time he was in Health? I am ſenſible indeed that all the Motives of *Fear* are then far more preſſing upon him, than at any other time: For whether he reflects upon what is paſt, or conſiders what is to come, both the one and the other preſent Objects only proper to ſtrike him with Terror. If he conſiders his Life paſt, he ſees nothing but what looks ominous upon him, and threatens him with everlaſting Puniſhment. If he looks before him, he ſees himſelf upon the Brink of Eternity, and an offended Judge ready to mount the Tribunal to pronounce his Doom. Now all theſe Objects are very

proper

proper indeed to create or increaſe Fear, but not to inſpire Love.

You will ſay, perhaps, the Conſideration of God's infinite Goodneſs, his boundleſs Mercies, the many particular Favours already received, and the like, are very ſtrong and powerful Motives to love: I own they are ſo; but why then do not all Men love God with their whole Hearts, ſince all have theſe Motives to love him? The Reaſon is, becauſe the very ſtrongeſt Motives muſt be duly applied to work their deſired Effect; and this can only be done by an attentive and reiterated Conſideration of them: For how powerful ſoever the forementioned Motives are to enkindle the Love of God, it is not, alas, a few diſtracted Thoughts, or paſſing Glances upon them, will immediately inflame the Heart! they muſt be leiſurely ruminated upon, and throughly digeſted, that ſo they may be made to ſink deeply into the Mind, and then by a gradual Progreſs make their Way to the Heart: Becauſe, unleſs the Ideas of Truths be firſt well imprinted on the Intellect, the Heart and Will can never be affected with them.

Now all this, humanly ſpeaking, requires not only Time, but all the Strength, Compoſure and Preſence of Thought a Perſon is capable of, even in the beſt State of

of Health: Which being doubtleſs much more than can be naturally expected from one diſabled with Sickneſs of Body, oppreſſed with Pains, and diſturbed with exceſſive Fears, we may juſtly apprehend a Death-bed Penitent makes for the moſt part but a very lame Buſineſs of it, and ſeldom paſſes beyond meer *ſervile Fear*; ſo that however ſincere his Repentance may appear outwardly, yet if the Root be defective, it is not that *worthy Fruit of Penance* the Goſpel requires, but rather like that Fruit, which grows near the *dead Sea*, fair to the Eye, but unſound at Heart.

And here I cannot but very much blame the indiſcreet Charity of thoſe, who are ever ready to pronounce with as much Aſſurance in Favour of Death-bed Penitents, as if there were no ground for any Doubt of their Salvation. *Oh!* (cries one) *with what extraordinary Devotion did ſuch a one receive the laſt Sacraments! He was a great Libertine indeed, but I doubt not but he has made a very happy End.* Now is not here as good Encouragement as can be given to Sinners to hazard all upon a Death-bed Repentance? Cou'd the Devil himſelf ſpeak more effectually to ſerve his own Purpoſe? For is not this the obvious Conſequence to be drawn from it? *You ſee here is one, that has indulged himſelf in all unlawful*

lawful Pleaſures to the very laſt, yet after all he made a very good End, and died very happily: And why then ſhould we deny ourſelves any Thing, or undergo the Hardſhip of doing Penance for our Sins, when Heaven may be purchaſed upon much eaſier Terms? Theſe doubtleſs are the moſt obvious and natural Inferences, Men are apt to draw from the forementioned Elogiums of Death-bed Converſions.

I am ſure at leaſt the Fathers ſpeak another Language, and are far from encouraging us to judge too much on the favourable Side in the Caſe of Death-bed Penitents. I ſhall omit St. *Chryſoſtom*'s Words, which are very terrible indeed, and only quote St. *Auſtin*; "If a Sinner (ſays he) in his "laſt Sickneſs deſires to be admitted to "Penance, and is immediately reconciled "and dies; I own indeed we deny him "not what he aſks, neither do we pre-"ſume he dies well. If he himſelf be ſe-"cure, I am not. For though we admini-"ſter Penance to him, we can give him "no Security. 'Tis true, I pronounce not "that he will be damned; neither do I "ſay that he will be ſaved. Wilt thou "therefore be delivered from all Doubt, "lay hold of what is certain, and depend "not upon what is uncertain. Do Pe-"nance whilſt thou art in Health. If

"thou

" thou doſt ſo, I tell thee thou art ſecure, " becauſe thou haſt done Penance, whilſt " thou hadſt it in thy Power to ſin. But " if thou wilt do Penance, when thou " canſt ſin no longer, thou leaveſt not off " ſinning, but thy Sins leave thee."

Theſe are St. *Auſtin*'s Words; and they ſuffice to convince us on the one hand, how far this holy Father was from being of the pretended charitable Diſpoſition of thoſe who are ſo ready to magnify Death-bed Converſions, and to let us know on the other, how mean an Opinion himſelf had of them. Truly we ought rather to ſpeak with Fear and Trembling of thoſe, who have been ſo unhappy as to run the Riſque of ſo dangerous an After-game, than by indiſcreet Elogiums to give a kind of Reputation to the Cheat, and help to inveigle others into the Snare.

But as we ought to be very wary and reſerved in this Point, ſo we cannot ſpeak with too much Aſſurance of the happy Circumſtances of thoſe, who have quitted their Sins, and done Penance in time of Health, whatever their Lives may have been before. And I heartily wiſh all may embrace this Courſe, which alone is ſafe after a ſinful Life. For Heaven has but two Gates, *Innocence* and *Penance*; the former is, I fear, already ſhut againſt moſt of us. All then

then we have to do is to ſecure the latter as ſoon as we can; leſt, if we drive it off too long, we may come to proſper no better than the *five fooliſh Virgins*, who beginning to trim their Lamps, when the Bridegroom's Door was ſhut, came too late for Admittance, and were repulſed with this Anſwer, *I know ye not.* And therefore our bleſſed Saviour concludes the Parable with this Admonition, *Be therefore watchful, for ye know not the Day nor Hour.*

'Tis certain no Man can tell how ſoon he may be called upon. He that is now in perfect Health, may be ſeized with a mortal Diſtemper before the End of this Month or Week. This will certainly happen to many in the World; and we have no Security but it may happen to any of us. So that the only aſſured Means to prevent our being reduced to the Neceſſity of a Death bed Repentance is, to let no time of Health ſlip from us, but lay immediately hold of it, and improve it to our beſt Advantage. And what Comfort will it be to us in our laſt Sickneſs to be interiourly convinced, that to the beſt of our Knowledge nothing has been wanting on our Side for the making of our Peace with God, and that the great Buſineſs, for which we came into this World, is then ready done to our Hands,

Hands, and wants nothing but the finiſhing Stroke to be given to it.

Oh! what a ſtrengthening Cordial will this be againſt the uſual Terrors of Death! With what Joy ſhall we then look back upon the good Works we have done, the Virtues we have practiſed, the Victories we have gained over our Paſſions, and the voluntary Mortifications we have undergone in Puniſhment of our Sins! But on the other hand, what Fear and Anguiſh, what Trouble, Darkneſs, and Perplexity of Thoughts will thoſe be ſeized with, who in their laſt Extremity ſee themſelves void of all ſolid Virtue, oppreſſed with a heavy Load of Sins, unprovided for Eternity, and under a preſſing Neceſſity to undertake a Work of the greateſt Importance imaginable, when diſpirited with Weakneſs, Pains, and Fears, and ſtreighten'd for Time, they neither have the Heart to ſet about it, nor are in any tolerable Condition to go thorough with it! If we could but ſee what paſſes in the Soul of a Wretch in this unhappy Condition, it would certainly terrify us from ever hazarding to fall into it; and the Sight of a Criminal upon the Rack would be a Spectacle of leſs Horror to us.

The Seventh Entertainment.

Of JUDGMENT.

The Importance of the Cauſe to be tried at the great Tribunal.

We muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, 2 Cor. v. 10.

OF all the Truths of Chriſtian Religion, none is more terrifying than that which is laid before us in theſe Words of St. *Paul*. Holy *Job* could never think of it without Trembling, *What ſhall I do*, ſays he, *when the Lord ſhall come to judge? Or when he ſhall demand an Account of me, what ſhall I anſwer for myſelf?* St. *Jerome* was no leſs ſenſibly affected with it, as himſelf relates; nor could he ever think of it, but he found himſelf ſeiz'd with Terror, and the Impreſſion ſunk ſo deep, that no Buſineſs could remove it from his Thoughts; for whatever he was doing, he imagined he heard the laſt Trumpet ſounding in his Ears, *Riſe ye Dead, and come to Judgment.* Many other Saints have lived under the ſame continual Apprehenſions of it; particularly

ly St. *Arſenius*, who in his laſt Sickneſs declared to thoſe that were about him, that ſince his Retirement into the Deſart, he had not paſſed one Day without Fear.

And truly 'tis no Wonder that Men, who gave themſelves Leiſure to think, and look'd farther than the preſent World, ſhould be terrify'd with the Proſpect of a Day which was to decide their eternal Lot: A Day, attended with all the Circumſtances proper to ſtrike Terror into any Heart that will but conſider them with due Attention: For the Saints were not content to allow them a general View, or paſſing Glance; but, in order to imprint the Ideas of them deeply on their Minds, they ruminated diſtinctly and leiſurely upon every Circumſtance relating to it. They conſider'd the infinite *Holineſs*, *Wiſdom*, *Power*, and *Majeſty* of the Judge, before whom they were to appear. They conſider'd the Exactneſs of the Scrutiny to be made of every Thought, Word, and Action of their whole Lives; the large Difference between God's Judgments, and thoſe of Men, the *weighty Importance of the Cauſe*, which when once decided would admit of no Appeal; and finally, the *Severity* and *Rigour of the Law*, by which it was to be tried.

By theſe Conſiderations often repeated, and thoroughly digeſted, they kept themſelves

ſelves in the Diſpoſition preſcribed by St. *Paul* of *working their Salvation in Fear and Trembling*. And if all Chriſtians would but follow their Method in this one Point, the Face of Chriſtendom would ſoon be changed, and Men would not let looſe the Reins to all ſinful Liberties, as if no Account were to be given hereafter. This certainly would be the Fruit of a frequent and ſerious Conſideration of the ſevere Judgment which every Man muſt undergo immediately after his Death. Since therefore I have now already gone through all the principal Conſiderations relating to *Death*, the Order of my Subject now calls upon me to ſpeak of this *Judgment*; which containing ſeveral Truths of great Concern, I will now begin with the weighty Importance of the Cauſe that is to be decided in it, which ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

When a Criminal under Confinement expects to be tried for his Life, if his Caſe admits of any Hope, he fails not to uſe all Endeavours poſſible to prepare himſelf ſo, that Sentence of Death may not be pronounced upon him: He makes all the Intereſt he can, conſults the ableſt Lawyers, ſtudies all his Anſwers to the Indictment that will be brought againſt him, and, in a

word, ſpares no Pains or Coſt to make a good Defence.

Now if any one ſhould aſk a Perſon under theſe Circumſtances, what Reaſon he has to be thus concern'd? why he gives himſelf ſo much Trouble? or to what Purpoſe he throws away ſo much Money? why he will not rather ſet his Heart at reſt, and ſtudy to divert himſelf? If any one, I ſay, ſhould put theſe Queſtions to him, his Anſwer would doubtleſs be, that he has Reaſon enough to be concern'd, and not ſit idle, when his Life is at ſtake. And without all Diſpute the Anſwer would be too rational and ſatisfactory to leave Room for any further Reply.

Yet after all, what is this precious Treaſure call'd *Life*, on which Men ſet ſo high a Value, and ſeek to preſerve at any Rate? Holy *Job* gives this Account of it: *Man born of a Woman lives a ſhort Time, and is fill'd with many Miſeries. He comes forth as a Flower, and is bruiſed into Duſt. He flies away as a Shadow, and never remains in the ſame State.* And St *James*, to expreſs the Shortneſs of it, calls it *a Vapour, that appears for a little Time, and then vaniſhes away.*

This is the valuable Treaſure we are ſo fond of, and which Nature has ſo ſtrong

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an Inclination to preſerve, and Fear to loſe, that no Buſineſs relating to this World is of equal Moment with that wherein Life is concern'd. And hence it is that the Caſe of a poor Criminal expecting to be brought to his Trial, to receive his final Doom, is by all eſteem'd a Concern of ſo high a Nature, that nothing can be done too much to prevent a Miſcarriage; and the Terror of it affects not only the Party concern'd, I mean the Criminal himſelf, but all that have any Tie, whether of Blood or Friendſhip with him, are intereſted, and ſolicitous for his Deliverance from the Danger that threatens him.

Now if a Cauſe of Life and Death in this World be juſtly eſteem'd a Buſineſs of ſo great a Concern, tho' all that can be loſt upon the Iſſue of it be no more than a ſhort and miſerable Life, who can find Words to expreſs, or Ideas to conceive the weighty Importance of a Cauſe, wherein the Soul's eternal and unchangeable Doom is to be determined. For the Thing, that is at ſtake in this Trial, is not, alas! the ſmall Remainder of a few Months or Years, the poor Comfort of a periſhable Life, or the uncertain Enjoyment of a temporal Eſtate, but the Intereſt and final Sentence of Eternity. *Heaven* and *Hell* are the Reward

and Puniſhment diſputed in it; that is, Life and Death without End, Joys and Torments without Meaſure. In a word, all that can be hoped for on the one hand, and all that can be fear'd on the other, depends upon the happy or unhappy Iſſue of it. Oh! what a weighty Concern is this! How inconſiderable and trivial are all things of this World, if put in Balance with it!

To give you a clear Idea of this Truth, I need but compare the *Goods* and *Evils* of this Life with the *Joys* and *Torments* of the Life to come, and ſhew the infinite Diſproportion there is between them. For in this Life every Thing is *mix'd*, the Enjoyments as well as Sufferings of this World have their Allays, and nothing is good or bad in Extreme.

Firſt, It's Joys are evidently of this Nature, ſince we find that even thoſe, who are eſteem'd moſt happy, are ſeldom or never content. When they have no real Evils to trouble them, imaginary ones are call'd in to ſupply the Place. Something is ever wanting, if not to reaſonable Deſires, at leaſt to ſatisfy Extravagance or Humour. They grow weary of what they have, and are uneaſy for what they have not. Thoſe Goods, from which Men meaſure their very worldly Happineſs, want not their Evils; their

their *Wealth* is encumber'd with Solicitudes and Fears; their *Honours* expoſe them to Envy and Cenſure; and their *Pleaſures* are either too ſhort or too long, and ſo cauſe either Diſappointment or Loathing. But let them be never ſo artfully contrived to prevent both the one and the other, the very Thought that they muſt all end in Death deſtroys a Part of their Satisfaction, and ſuffices alone to caſt a Damp upon their moſt refined and heighten'd Joys.

This is the general Condition of the *Goods* of this Life, and it's *Evils* are of the ſame *mix'd* Nature, and have all their peculiar Abatements. For if *Pain* be the Evil Men are afflicted with, it is either moderate or violent. If moderate, it is tolerable, and there's no great Reaſon to complain. If violent, it cannot laſt long. Beſides, a good Conſcience, and the Hopes of an eternal Repoſe, ſweetens the one as well as the other, and is as a continual Feaſt. So that whilſt the Body is in Pain, the Mind may be at Eaſe, and then the Comfort is greater than the Affliction.

But if *Diſgrace* be the Evil that troubles them, they either deſerve it or not. If not, they ſuffer innocently, the Conſciouſneſs whereof is a moſt ſolid Comfort. But if they have brought it upon themſelves

ſelves by any Crime, or culpable Indiſcretion, they may draw a ſubſtantial Good from the Evil they ſuffer, by ſubmitting humbly to it; and ſo make their Diſgrace with Men become a Step to raiſe them in the Favour and Eſteem of God.

Laſtly, If *Poverty* be their Croſs, they have at leaſt the Advantage of being free from the Snares and Temptations of Riches; and the Advantage is very conſiderable, if rightly valued. Beſides, if their Circumſtances be narrow, 'tis but contracting their Deſires within the ſame Bounds, and a reaſonable Content may be found in any State. 'Tis true, they have not the Pleaſures and Conveniences which the Rich enjoy, but they are alſo without the Dangers to which their Enjoyments expoſe them: They are likewiſe without the Uneaſineſs of Mind, which all conſcientious rich Men muſt needs be under, in regard of the Account they muſt give of their Stewardſhip to God. For they are but in Effect his Stewards, and will be reſponſable to him for all Abuſes committed in their Stewardſhip. Add to this, that the Poor are but by God's Appointment in the very ſame Condition which many Thouſands have made their voluntary Choice, nay was choſen by Chriſt himſelf, and pronounced by him

him a *bleſſed State.* And is not this a ſolid Comfort? But tho' all other Comforts ſhould be wanting, the Conſideration, that Death will infallibly put an End to all their Sufferings in this World, is one at leaſt that can never fail.

Thus then we ſee that neither the *Goods* nor *Evils* of this Life are without Mixtures, it's ſweeteſt Joys are ſprinkled with Bitterneſs, and it's bittereſt Sorrows have an Allay of Comfort either in Preſent or Reverſion. But in the World to come Matters are not ſo. Every Thing there is pure and unmix'd. All Sorrow is baniſh'd from Heaven, and in Hell there is no Comfort. So that the future State of the Soul being once fix'd admits of no Mean; but is either infinitely miſerable, or infinitely happy. Becauſe God being an infinite Good, the Poſſeſſion of him cannot but be an infinite Bleſſing, and the Loſs of him an infinite Evil. And hence there is no *Diſcontent* in Heaven, becauſe the bleſſed Souls enjoy whatever they can wiſh or deſire: No *Diſappointment*, becauſe all their Hopes are fully ſatisfied: No *Wearineſs* or *Loathing*, becauſe the Object that renders them happy, always is and always appears the ſame. Finally, no *Fear*, becauſe they know their State to be permanent and ever-

laſting; they poſſeſs ineſtimable *Riches*, without Solicitude or Trouble; they are crown'd with *Honour* and *Glory*, without Jealouſy or Envy; and are inceſſantly fill'd with incomprehenſible *Delights* and *Pleaſures*, without Satiety.

But as the heavenly Beatitude is a State made up of all Goods every Way perfect and complete, ſo *Damnation*, which is the State diametrically oppoſite to it, is a moſt frightful Aggregation of all imaginable Evils without any Mixture of Good. For in Hell the Soul is deprived of every Thing ſhe loves or deſires, and condemn'd to every Thing ſhe abhors or fears. She has a violent Inclination in her Nature to be happy, and ſhe knows herſelf eternally ſeparated from every Thing that is capable of contributing to it. She craves after Wealth and Plenty, and ſhe ſees herſelf ſtripp'd naked of every Thing, and ſunk into the loweſt Degree of Miſery and Want. She loves Honour and Eſteem, and ſhe is condemn'd to everlaſting Confuſion and Diſgrace. In a word, Happineſs and Content, Eaſe and Pleaſures, are the Things ſhe moſt earneſtly thirſts after, and ſhe is doom'd to Torments, without any Glimpſe or Shadow of Comfort: Torments,

never

never to be intermitted, never to be abated, never to end.

Now from this terrible Difference between the Condition of Things temporal and eternal, and the infinite Greatneſs both of the Rewards and Puniſhments of the other World, we may form ſome Idea of the weighty Importance of the Cauſe that is to be decided at the great Tribunal. For it follows clearly from them that the Importance of it ſurpaſſes all Concerns even of the higheſt Nature in this World, as much as Heaven is above Earth, as much as Eternity exceeds a ſhort Term of Time, or the infinite Being of God ſurpaſſes all limited and created Beings. And therefore ſince theſe have no Manner of Proportion, 'tis plain that all earthly Concerns, even thoſe that are attended with the moſt weighty Conſequences, are no more than childiſh Toys and Trifles, in Compariſon with the great Buſineſs that is to be decided hereafter. For whereas all the Buſineſs of this Life is about Things that are neither permanent nor ſolid in their Nature, as I have ſhewn, we may truly ſay they are ſcarce worth our being ſolicitous about them. But the Goods and Evils of the other World being infinite and everlaſting, the Conſequence of our ſucceeding or miſcarrying

in a Cauſe, which is to give the final Determination to our future State, comprehends all whatever a rational and immortal Soul can either love or hate, hope or fear, wiſh or abhor.

And therefore at whatever Moment our Souls are ſummon'd to appear before the Tribunal of Chriſt, it will then be irrevocably determined, whether we are to be the happieſt or moſt unfortunate Creatures that God can make us: Whether Heaven with all it's infinite Joys, or Hell with all its inconceivable Torments, whether Delights pure and unmix'd, or Evils without any Shadow of Comfort, are to be our everlaſting Portion. If we be found free from Guilt, Life without End, Joys without Sorrow, Fulneſs without Satiety, incorruptible Riches, immortal Honours, and a Crown of Glory that will never fade, will be our Reward. But if we be found guilty of any mortal Sin deliberately committed, and not waſh'd off by true Repentance, alas! poor Wretches, we are then immediately ſentenced to be for ever baniſh'd from the Sight of God, doom'd to unquenchable Flames, and condemn'd to all that is dreadful without any Hopes of ever enjoying one Moment of Eaſe, Relief, Intermiſſion or Abatement of our Pains. O dreadful Judg-

ment,

ment, on which the Soul's eternal and unchangeable Lot depends! Dreadful Judgment, after which (allowing only for the temporal Puniſhment of pious Souls not fully purified) there is no Mean to be found, but every thing is infinite, incomprehenſible, eternal.

For this Reaſon our Saviour exhorts us *not to fear thoſe who can kill the Body, but only him, who when the Body is deſtroyed, can caſt the Soul into Hell-fire.* For this Reaſon he tells us, *that it profits a Man nothing to gain the whole World, if he loſes his Soul.* Finally, for this Reaſon he commands us to ſacrifice an *Eye*, *Hand*, or *Foot*, or whatever is deareſt and moſt precious to us in this Life, rather than be hereafter condemned to everlaſting Flames. And it was undoubtedly the Conſideration of theſe terrifying Truths which made St. *Auſtin* pray to God to be burnt, tortured, or cut to Pieces here, ſo he might but be ſpared hereafter. 'Twas this made the holy Martyrs prefer burning Gridirons, Gibbets, Rods, and Axes, before the Pleaſures of this Life. And the ſame Motive induced ſo many holy Men and Women to renounce all Satisfactions of Nature, and fly to Caves and Deſarts, to ſhelter themſelves againſt the Terrors and irreparable Misfortunes of the Day of Wrath.

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And truly, what Wonder is it they ſhould renounce Trifles, to ſecure eternal and ſubſtantial Goods? Or that they ſhould chooſe to undergo ſome temporal Pains and Inconveniencies, rather than expoſe themſelves to eternal Miſeries and Torments? For this is no more than acting according to the Dictates of Reaſon, which naturally prompt us to give the Preference to the greater Good, and of two Evils to chooſe the leſſer. But what juſtly challenges our greateſt Surpriſe and Amazement is, that even thoſe, who would not enjoy one Moment's Reſt, if either Life or Eſtate were in danger, ſhould be charmed into a dead Sleep, and live on with all the Unconcern imaginable, whilſt Heaven and Eternity are at ſtake, and in manifeſt danger of being irreparably loſt. This is ſo monſtrous an Infatuation, that one would think it were inconſiſtent either with Faith or Reaſon; and yet how many Chriſtians are guilty of it? How many are there that live as if there either were no Day of Reckoning to come, or the Intereſt depending on it were beneath their Concern?

Preſerve us, O God, from this fatal Blindneſs. Pierce our Hearts with the Terrors of thy Judgments, and give us ſo deep a Senſe of the weighty Importance

tance of ſecuring our eternal Happineſs, that nothing may ever divert us from it.

The Eighth Entertainment.

The Rigour of the Law by which we are to be judged.

The Word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him in the laſt Day, John xii. 48.

THESE Words of Chriſt mark out clearly to us the *Law* by which we are to be judged; to wit, the *evangelical Law* contained in the four Goſpels, and other Tracts of the New Teſtament. It therefore concerns us all to be in ſome Meaſure informed of the Nature of this Law: For our *All* depends upon it; our eternal Lot will be decided by it, and if it finds us guilty, we are loſt for ever. My preſent Deſign then is to explain to you this important Circumſtance both of the *firſt* and *laſt Judgment*, viz. the Rigour of the Law by which we are to be judged. And this ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis

'Tis related in the tenth Chapter of St. *Luke*, that our Saviour, being conſulted by a *Jewiſh Doctor* concerning the Means neceſſary to Salvation, inſtead of ſatisfying him with a direct Anſwer, referred him to the Law. *In lege quid ſcriptum eſt? quomodo legis?* What is written in the Law? how doſt thou read? Giving him thereby to underſtand, that to ſave his Soul, he only needed to conſult the Law of God, and do according as it ſhould direct him.

Now as the Laws of civil Governments ſerve to a double Purpoſe, *viz.* to direct and puniſh; to regulate the Duties of civil Life, and convict the Offenders againſt them, ſo is it in the ſpiritual Kingdom of Chriſt. God has made us an ample Proviſion of Laws, ſome of which are ſet down in the moral Tracts of the Old Teſtament, and ſummed up in the two Tables of the Decalogue. But theſe being not only reinforced but explained by *Chriſt*, we may truly ſay that the Goſpels, which deliver his ſacred Doctrine in his own Words, and the other Parts of the New Teſtament, which are but Comments upon them, contain the whole Body of the *Chriſtian Law*; that is, of all the *Precepts*, *Rules*, and *Maxims*, upon which a Chriſtian is bound to model his Life.

Whence

Whence it follows, that as a Chriſtian is bound to live according to the Direction of this Law, ſo will he be hereafter judged, and either ſaved or condemned by it. The Goſpel is his Guide, and he muſt follow it, if he will attain to Life everlaſting. The Goſpel is his Rule, and if he ſwerves from it, he muſt expect to undergo the Severity of it. In a word, the Goſpel is the Law he profeſſes, and he muſt ſtand or fall by it at the Day of Judgment. So that this Queſtion, *What is written in the Law? how doſt thou read?* propoſed by *Chriſt* to the *Jewiſh* Doctor, will then be preſſed home to every Chriſtian. All our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, will be brought to this Teſt, and every Article of the Indictment againſt us examined by it. Whatever is found conformable to this Law, will be approved and rewarded; and whatever appears contrary to it, will be condemned and puniſhed. Infine, this Sentence of our Saviour to the *Jews*, *The Word that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him in the laſt Day*, will be fully made good in Relation to every one of us. And happy he, who now lives ſo up to it as to be hereafter able to ſtand the Trial of it.

It being therefore certain that the Goſpel is the Law which is to judge us, let

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us now inquire into the Nature of it, and ſee whether it will in any likelihood prove favourable to our Cauſe, or whether it will not rather increaſe the Terror of the laſt Day. Let any one but apply himſelf to an attentive Conſideration of the holy Doctrine it contains, and if he be not wholly inſenſible, he will find himſelf ſeized with Fear, when he reflects, that at the opening of the Books of Conſcience, all the Particulars of his Life enter'd into thoſe ſacred Regiſters will be compared with it, and his eternal Doom determined by it. For I obſerve three Things in it very terrifying and full of Rigour. *Firſt*, We ſhall be accountable to it for the *Secrets* of our *Hearts*, as well as *outward Works*. *Secondly*, It will have no Regard to the *corrupt Cuſtoms* and Maxims of this World. And, *Thirdly*, The Duties, of which it will require an Account, are moſtly ſuch as our corrupt Nature has the greateſt Repugnance to. From theſe three Heads we may eaſily gather, how little favourable this Law is like to prove to the important Cauſe that is to be decided by it. I ſhall make a few Remarks upon each.

Firſt then, we ſhall ſtand accountable to it for the *Secrets* of our *Hearts* as well as *outward Works*. And whereas human Laws reſtrain only the *Hand* and *Tongue*, but

but are forced to leave Men the Freedom of their Thoughts, the Goſpel Law will on the contrary take as ſtrict a Cognizance of what we have *thought*, as of what we have ſaid or done. Our *Deſires* will be as nicely looked into as our Deeds. Our very *Intentions* will be weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and the Motives upon which we have acted, as ſeverely examined as the Actions themſelves. So that what many times is ſound in Subſtance, and ſeemingly above all Exception, will, in this Court of Judicature, be found vitiated in its Principle or Root: Here all the ſubtle Inſinuations of *Pride*, and ſecret Contrivances of *Self-love*, will be narrowly ſearched into, and pronounced upon. Here a ſtrict Inquiry will be made of, how much has been done meerly for Intereſt, how much to gratify ſome particular Humour, or to gain Eſteem and Applauſe. And whatever ſhall be found to have been influenced by theſe or other ſuch human Reſpects, though it was highly valued and admired in this World, will be diſapproved and cenſured by the Law that is to judge us.

But of all the wicked Stratagems of corrupt Nature, none will be more ſeverely judged than the *Hypocriſy* of thoſe who, under the Maſk of Zeal for Religion, have covered the blackeſt Deſigns of ruining

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the Reputation of their real or reputed Enemies, by malicious Inſinuations, or accuſing them of Crimes whereof they were wholly innocent. And I ſhall only add, that whoever finds his Conſcience charged with any Part of this Unchriſtian Practice, though his Intention was never ſo ſeemingly pious (for a good Intention can never juſtify a bad Deed) cannot hope for Mercy at the Day of Judgment, without firſt making a Reparation anſwerable to the Injuſtice he has committed.

Secondly, This Law will have no Regard to the uſual Plea of this World from *Cuſtom* or *Example*; I mean, in favour of ſuch Practices as interfere with or incroach upon any Branch of the Doctrine of the Goſpel. For truly, if Cuſtom ſhould hereafter be allowed to put in its Plea, and influence the Deciſion of our Cauſe, I ſhould be obliged to own, that many of thoſe, who in all likelihood will make but a very unfortunate Buſineſs of it, would have as fair a Proſpect of ſucceeding as they could wiſh, and Doomſday would not be ſo frightful by many Degrees as it is every where repreſented. For, excepting only enormous Crimes, what would not Cuſtom apologize for? All modiſh Vices would find ſhelter under its Protection. *Pride, Idleneſs, Intemperance, Immodeſty in dreſſing*,

ing, *Revenge*, and *Prodigality*, would not want an Advocate to plead their Cauſe; and, in a word, all faſhionable Extravagances would have good Warrant to ſecure them.

But, alas! this Plea will be out of doors at the great Day of Aſſizes. It carries indeed a great Sway now, and has a Power which few are able to reſiſt. But it ends with this World: nor will its Laws be in the leaſt conſulted by the ſupreme Arbiter of Life and Death. So that, whoever has nothing but *Cuſtom* or *Example* to alledge for his Juſtification, will make but a very weak Defence.

Hence, in the World to come, it will be to very little Purpoſe to ſay, *I have done as others did before me. I followed the common Practice. I thought it neceſſary to conform myſelf to Cuſtom.* For though this be a plauſible Cover now, and carries a fair Shew of Reaſon for any Thing that is not groſsly ſcandalous, it will not ſatisfy hereafter; and the general Anſwer to all theſe ſpecious Pretences will be, *What is writ in the Law? how doſt thou read?* that is, *have thy Actions been conformable to the Goſpel?* This, I ſay, will be the general Anſwer to all the pretended Reaſons for Cuſtom and Compliance, wherewith corrupt Nature ſeeks now to put a Gloſs upon the Works of Self-love and Pride.

Pride. For when God comes to judge, this Varniſh will be taken off, and every Thing be made to appear in its proper Colours. The *evangelical Law* will then have its full Courſe, in ſpite of all the contrary Cuſtoms of the World; and nothing will find Approbation, but what can ſtand the Trial of it.

Nay, *Cuſtom*, the great Law-maker of this World, will be ſo far from helping us out at the Day of Judgment, that our having conformed to it, in Contradiction to the Goſpel, will be a conſiderable Article againſt us; as is evident both from the many *Woes* pronounced by Chriſt againſt the *World*, and the repeated Prohibitions recorded in Holy Writ againſt conforming to it. *Be not conform'd to this World*, ſays St. *Paul*. And *whoever*, ſays St. *James*, *will be a Friend of this World, becomes an Enemy of God.*

Oh! how many worldly Chriſtians, who have nothing but Cuſtom to plead for them, will be condemned by this very Maxim of the evangelical Law! How will they ſtand confounded, when they find all their fine Reaſons of pretended Decency and Compliance rejected as frivolous, and no other Plea admitted, but what is grounded upon the Conformity of their Actions to the Law they ſwore to

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at the Font! And yet this will certainly be the unhappy Caſe of all ſuch Lovers and Admirers of the World, as had more Regard to its Approbation and Eſteem, than to what the Law of God demanded of them.

Thirdly, The Duties, of which it will demand an Account, are moſtly ſuch as corrupt Nature has the greateſt Repugnance to. This will appear beyond all Diſpute, if we but reflect, that it will hereafter demand an Account of what it now *commands* and *forbids*; and pronounce upon us according as we have been exact or deficient in performing the one and avoiding the other. Now whoever will but ſeriouſly apply himſelf to read and ſtudy the evangelical Law with an unbiaſſed Judgment, and ſincere Deſire to diſcover the true Spirit and Meaning of it, will find that the greateſt Part of its Precepts and Maxims either oblige us to Things from which our Nature is very averſe, or prohibits Things to which it is moſt ſtrongly inclined. For what is it our Nature chiefly *loves* or *hates*? It loves *Honour* and *Eſteem*, *Wealth* and *Pomp*, *Eaſe*, *Liberty*, and *Pleaſures*; and, by Conſequence, it regards *Poverty*, *Contempt*, *Reſtraint*, and *Suffering*, as its greateſt Grievances. Now the Goſpel not only cries down all the forementioned Objects

jects of our Inclinations, and preaches up the Objects of our Averſions, but obliges all its Diſciples to ſuch Duties, as directly thwart Nature both in the one and the other.

As for Inſtance, what can mortify Nature more in its Inclination to *Honour* and *Eſteem*, than to be bound to imitate the Humility of the Croſs? to bear the Confuſion of confeſſing our moſt hidden Sins? to humble ourſelves before God and Man? to love and do good to them that deſpiſe, traduce, and affront us? Yet all theſe Duties are required of us by the Law that is to judge us.

Secondly, What can thwart our Nature more in its Love of *Wealth* and *Pomp*, than to be bound not to ſet our Hearts and Affections upon them, and be in a readineſs to ſacrifice all we enjoy in this World rather than betray our Duty, or offend God mortally? Yet this we are obliged to by the Law that is to judge us.

Thirdly, What can croſs Nature more in its Love of *Liberty* and *Eaſe*, than to be under an Obligation of improving the Talents we have received? Of being watchful over our Senſes? of bridling the Tongue, avoiding the Occaſions of Sin, and being faithful in acquitting ourſelves of all the Duties of our reſpective Stations and Callings? Yet we are charged with all

all theſe Obligations by the Law that is to judge us.

Fourthly and *laſtly*, What greater Contradiction can there be to our natural Propenſity to *Pleaſure*, than *ſtriving to enter through the narrow Gate*; *gaining the Kingdom of Heaven by violence*; *doing worthy Fruits of Penance*; *hating and denying ourſelves*; *mortifying the Deeds of the Fleſh by the Spirit*; *crucifying the Fleſh with all its Affections and Luſts*; *abſtaining from all Things to gain the Crown*; and, in a word, imitating the ſerious, laborious, and ſuffering Life of our heavenly Pattern *Jeſus Chriſt?* Yet all theſe Duties are in a certain Degree required of us by the Law that is to judge us. So that nothing is plainer, than that this Law obliges us to many Duties moſt diſreliſhing to Nature, and directly oppoſite to its ſtrongeſt Inclinations. And, by conſequence, as it now requires them of us, ſo ſhall we be hereafter accountable to it for the Performance.

The holy Fathers were undoubtedly of this Opinion: For they uſed it for the moſt Part as an Argument to convince Idolaters, that the planting of the Chriſtian Faith was the Work of a Divine and ſupernatural Power; and that nothing but the Hand of God could ever have carried it on,

on, and brought it to Perfection. Now if the Doctrine of the Goſpel ſuited with the Humour of the World, or were agreeable to Fleſh and Blood, the Argument had been wholly frivolous; for what need of the Hand of God to bring Men over to a Religion that flattered their Inclinations? What need of a divine and ſupernatural Power to carry on an Undertaking that ſhould meet no Oppoſition in Men's Nature to hinder its Succeſs? But it being ſuppoſed that the Chriſtian Doctrine runs counter in many Things both to the received Maxims of the World, and the moſt preſſing Inclinations of Fleſh and Blood, the Argument was unanſwerable; and the holy Fathers uſing it againſt the Pagans for that Purpoſe, is an evident Proof, that this was their Idea of it.

Neither were the Fathers alone of this Perſuaſion; but all the Saints, whom the Church honours as ſuch, and recommends to our Imitation, have ever agreed with them in their Ideas of the Rigour of the Goſpel; as the Method of their Lives, which they formed upon it, ſufficiently teſtifies. For was it not their daily and only Buſineſs to ſtudy to deny and mortify themſelves? Conſider but the Particulars of their Lives, and you will find it ſo. For they renounced whatever

Nature

Nature delights in, and made choice of what it has an Averſion to. They ſpent their Days in the moſt laborious Practices of Penance. They brought their Bodies under Subjection, and ſubdued their rebellious Paſſions by praying, watching, faſting, and other Auſterities. In a word, they engaged themſelves in a continual War againſt all the Pleaſures, Liberties, and Satisfactions of this World.

Now what induced the Saints, who wore the ſame Fleſh and Blood, and were as ſenſible both of Pleaſure and Pain as the reſt of their Fellow-Mortals, what induced them, I ſay, to undertake a Courſe of Life ſo oppoſite to all the Inclinations of Nature? 'Twas undoubtedly their Perſuaſion, that whatever they did in this kind was but conformable to the Law, whereof they profeſſed themſelves Diſciples, and to which they were to be accountable hereafter. For without this Perſuaſion it had certainly been impoſſible, that Men in their Senſes, and naturally as great Lovers of themſelves as the reſt of Mankind, ſhould ever have made ſo ſtrange a Choice, as to prefer Sufferings and Self-denials to the Pleaſures and Conveniences of Life; and therefore we muſt either charge the Saints with Folly and Deluſion, or conclude the evangelical Law, from

which they took their Meaſures, is far more ſevere in its Precepts and Maxims, than the World ſeems willing to own: Not that it follows hence, that the Goſpel obliges all Chriſtians to live up to the Auſterities practiſed by the Saints; but it is above all Queſtion, that it obliges them to ſomething that bears a Reſemblance with it; and that a Life, which is a flat Contradiction to theirs, and the very Reverſe of it, neither has the Goſpel for it's Pattern, nor will hereafter be able to ſtand the Trial of it.

Thus I have laid before you both the weighty Importance of the Cauſe that is to be tried before the great Tribunal, and the Severity of the Law by which it is to be tried: I leave you now to judge, whether we can pretend to act rationally, if we make it not our moſt ſerious Endeavour to ſecure a Point of ſuch infinite Importance on the one hand, and liable to ſo great a Hazard on the other; or whether we ought not to be at leaſt as active, careful, and ſolicitous in managing this Concern, as we ſhould be in caſe ſomething of very great Importance relating to this World were at ſtake.

Let us then ſuppoſe we were now fallen into the Hands of Juſtice, kept under cloſe Confinement, and expecting daily to be

be tried for our Lives; what ſhould we do in this Caſe? what Meaſures would be taken? would we ſit down with our Arms acroſs, or entertain ourſelves with ſome frivolous Amuſement till we were ſummon'd to the Bar? ſhould we not rather look about us in Time, and buſy ourſelves in preparing for our Trial, by making Friends, by conſulting ſome ſkilful Lawyer, by ſtudying our Defence, and Anſwers to the Evidence that would appear againſt us? Eſpecially if we were perſuaded, that by taking theſe Precautions we might ſecure our Lives and Fortunes, and by neglecting them we ſhould certainly loſe both the one and the other.

Now tho' the Caſe ſuppoſed be but a Shadow of the real one, which regards the Buſineſs of the Life to come, yet the Meaſures, we ſhould reſolve upon in the one, may be ſome Direction as to what we ought to do in the other. Let us then conſider, that we muſt all one Day appear before the *Tribunal of Chriſt*, to receive Sentence of eternal Life or Death. This World is our Priſon, whence we muſt one Day go forth in order to our Trial in the next. We know not how ſoon we may be call'd upon. All we are ſure of is, that we muſt come to it ſooner or later. However, during our Confinement here below,

we may order Matters ſo, that the Trial, inſtead of being a Day of Terror and Confuſion, may be a Day of Joy and Honour to us. And how muſt this be done? by only taking proportionably the ſame Meaſures, as we would in the Caſe ſuppoſed.

Let us then do as much to ſave our Souls, as we would to ſave our Lives, and all will go well. Let us not waſte our Time in idle or ſinful Amuſements, but make it our principal Buſineſs from henceforwards to prepare for our Trial, by *making Friends*, by adviſing with ſome *ſkilful Lawyer*, and *ſtudying our Anſwers to* the Accuſations we already know will be brought againſt us.

The principal Perſon, with whom we muſt endeavour to make an Intereſt, is our *Advocate* and *Mediator Jeſus Chriſt*. Let us bewail our Sins daily before him, with an humble and ſincere Repentance. Let us now make him our Pattern, and he will not fail to be our Friend, even when he comes to be our Judge.

2*dly*, We muſt make an Intereſt with the *Saints*, and particularly with the *Bleſſed Virgin*, by a devout Obſervance of their Feaſts, by imitating their Virtues, and often imploring their Interceſſion. And, 3*dly*, according to our Saviour's Advice, we muſt *make to ourſelves Friends of the Mammon of Injuſtice*: that

that is, gain the *Poor* over to our ſide, and purchaſe their Prayers by frequent Alms. Let us but fee the Poor as we would our Lawyers, in caſe we had a conſiderable Law-ſuit depending, and it will go a great way towards the gaining our Cauſe. Their Prayers have a great Power with our Judge, becauſe they are his Repreſentatives here upon Earth, and what is done to them for Chriſt his Sake will be accepted, as if it had been done to *Chriſt* himſelf.

We muſt alſo conſult from Time to Time ſome *ſkilful Lawyer*, I mean, ſome prudent Director, whoſe Advice we may depend upon. But then we muſt take care to ſtate our Caſe fairly to him. For if we uſe Double-dealing, or conceal any thing of Moment from him, tho' he were an Angel, we ſhould periſh under his Hands.

Laſtly, We muſt prepare our Anſwers to the Accuſations we already know will be brought againſt us. Now if we can but make it appear, that we have done *worthy Fruits of Penance*, this will be an unexceptionable Anſwer to all Accuſations of what kind ſoever. Becauſe all *Penitent Sinners*, that is, all Sinners, tho' never ſo enormous, if they do worthy Fruits of Penance to expiate their Sins paſt, and begin a new Courſe of Life, and perſevere in it, have

God's own infallible Promiſe of Mercy deliver'd in theſe expreſs Terms; *When the wicked Man turns away from the Wickedneſs he has committed, and does Judgment and Juſtice, he ſhall certainly live, and he ſhall not die.*

The Ninth ENTERTAINMENT.

The infinite Knowledge of the Judge.

There is nothing cover'd that ſhall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that ſhall not be known. Matt. x. 26.

IN the Introduction to my firſt Diſcourſe upon *Judgment*, I made a ſhort Enumeration of the moſt weighty Circumſtances relating to it, and have already enlarged upon two of them, *viz.* the Importance of the Cauſe that is to be decided in it, and the Rigour of the *Law* by which it is to be tried. It remains now to ſay ſomething concerning the Character of the Judge before whom we are to appear. You all know the Perſon is *Jeſus Chriſt*, true God and true Man; and therefore infinite in all the Attributes belonging

belonging to the divine Nature; as *Power*, *Knowledge*, *Goodneſs*, *Juſtice*, and *Mercy*. Now if I were to conſider him in Quality of *Redeemer* of Mankind, or as he is the *Advocate* of Sinners, his *infinite Mercies* would be a proper Subject for me to dwell upon: But ſince I am now to ſpeak of him only as *Judge*, you will not be ſurpriſed to hear me deliver ſuch Truths, as are more apt to cauſe Terror than Comfort.

However, it is a certain Truth, that the whole Courſe of this Life is a Time of *Mercy*, and the greateſt Sinners are capable of receiving the Benefit of it to the very laſt Gaſp: But after that, we enter into another World, where *Juſtice* takes place, and *every one will receive*, as St. *Paul* aſſures us, preciſely *according to his Works:* I ſhall therefore conſider three Things in the Judge before whom we are to appear; 1. His *infinite Knowledge*, which nothing can eſcape; 2. His being the very Perſon, whom we offend by every Sin we commit; and, 3. His being *infinitely Juſt*. I ſhall reſerve the two latter Conſiderations for my next Diſcourſe, and at preſent ſpeak only of his *infinite Knowledge*, which therefore ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

A Criminal, who is to be tried for his Life, is apt to comfort himſelf in ſome

meaſure with the flattering Hopes, that either the Indictment will not be fully proved againſt him, or that the Witneſſes may be bought off, or that the Judge, whom he has never perſonally offended, may be moved to Compaſſion, and not proceed againſt him according to the utmoſt Rigour of the Law. But a Criminal, who is to have *Chriſt* for his Judge, cannot comfort himſelf with any of theſe flattering Thoughts. And nothing but a Conſcience free from mortal Sin can hinder Sentence of eternal Death from paſſing upon him.

Firſt then all Hopes of having any Thing conceal'd or palliated is utterly excluded by the *infinite Wiſdom* and *Knowledge* of the divine Perſon who is to be our Judge: For as nothing can reſiſt an *infinite Power*, ſo nothing can eſcape the Penetration of an *infinite Knowledge*; which tho' it be in itſelf above our Comprehenſion, it is however neceſſary to form the beſt Idea of it we can, ſince without it we cannot rightly apprehend how terrible a Thing it is for a Criminal to appear before, and have his eternal Lot decided by a Judge of that Character: Now, tho' nothing that is *infinite* can be fully comprehended by us, yet ſome imperfect Idea may be form'd of the *infinite Knowledge* of God, by comparing it with the Knowledge of created in-

intellectual Beings, or by conſidering it in its Effects, and with relation to the Government of this World.

As to the Knowledge of created intellectual Beings, tho' that of the *Angels*, who are pure intellectual Spirits, be very great, and ſurpaſſes by many Degrees the largeſt Capacity of human Underſtanding, yet being *created*, it is by Conſequence *limited:* The eternal Wiſdom has ſet Bounds to it as to the Ocean, and ſaid, *thus far it ſhall go and no farther:* Nay, tho' God ſhould every Moment, to the World's End, create Angels ſtill perfecter in Knowledge, yet the perfecteſt of them would ſtill ſay with St. *Michael, quis ut Deus? who is as God?* becauſe a Knowledge which is *infinite*, that is, unlimited and without Bounds, cannot be meaſured by one that is limited: A ſingle Drop of Water has a Proportion to the whole Ocean; God perfectly knows what the Proportion is, and can make an exact Enumeration of the Number of Drops which ſuffice to compoſe that vaſte Body of Waters; becauſe both the one and the other are limited, and have their Bounds preciſely meaſured out: But the Diſtance between a limited and unlimited Perfection, is always *infinite*, and to whatever Perfection the Knowledge of a Creature may be raiſed, it is not ſo much as the ſmalleſt Drop of

Water to the whole Ocean, if compared to the infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge of God.

However, our Idea of it will be ſtill raiſed higher, if we conſider it in it's Effects, and with relation to the Government of the World: Conſider therefore this vaſt Bulk of the terreſtrial Globe, and the Air that encompaſſes it: The Earth, inhabited by Millions of Souls, adorn'd with a prodigious Variety of Trees, Plants, and Flowers, and affording Nouriſhment both above Ground, and within its Bowels, to innumerable ſenſitive Creatures: The Seas, Lakes, and Rivers ſtock'd with Fiſh, and the Air with Fowl: Then conſider again, that altho' this prodigious Body of the Univerſe has already ſubſiſted for many Ages, yet it continues ſtill as vigorous in all it's Productions, and as regular and uniform in paſſing yearly thro' all that admirable Succeſſion and Variety of Seaſons, as it was in the very Beginning of it's Creation: The Order of Nature is regularly maintain'd, the ſame Cauſes produce the ſame Effects now as they did above five Thouſand Years ago; and tho' all Mankind, and other living Creatures, be daily ſupplied by the Earth, Sea, and Air, yet their Stores are neither exhauſted nor diminiſhed by it.

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Here then we may juſtly cry out with St. *Paul*, *O unſearchable Depth of the Treaſure of Wiſdom, and Knowledge of God!* which neither Length of Time can wear out, nor Diſtance of Place divide, nor Variety of Objects diſtract, nor Multiplicity of Buſineſs perplex or weaken; *a Thouſand Years*, ſays the royal Prophet, *are before thine Eyes like Yeſterday, which is juſt paſt.* And ſo a Thouſand different Objects, nay, if you pleaſe, a Million of Millions are no more than a ſingle one of the moſt trivial Nature, to the infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge of God. Becauſe being infinite, it cannot be confined either by Number or Place, but *reaching ſtrongly from End to End* is preſent to all Objects, Times, and Places; and diſpoſes, moves, and governs all Things with the ſame immoveable Tranquillity, Order, and Attention, as if it had but one ſingle Creature to inſpect and provide for.

Neither muſt we imagine that his infinite Wiſdom only applies itſelf to the moſt weighty Concerns of this World, and leaves the reſt to Chance, or the pure Courſe of Nature: For *Chriſt* himſelf has taken care to inſtruct us, that the *divine Providence*, and by Conſequence, *Knowledge*, extends itſelf even to the moſt trivial Things, as the *numbering the very Hairs*

of

of our Heads, or the Deſtiny of a little Bird ſcarce worth a Farthing: *Are not two Sparrows*, ſays Chriſt, *ſold for a Farthing, and one of them ſhall not fall to the Ground without your Father.* After which nothing more can be ſaid to heighten our Idea of the unſearchable Depth and boundleſs Extent of an infinite Knowledge, particularly as it regards the great Buſineſs of the laſt Day, and the ſtrict Account to be made in it: For if amongſt ſo many Millions of Creatures, as are the Objects of God's Providence, even ſo inconſiderable a one as a *Sparrow is not forgotten before the Father*, as St. *Luke* expreſſes it; if the Government of the whole Univerſe, with all the weighty Affairs tranſacted in it, cannot hinder him from taking an exact Cogniſance of the Number even of the *Hairs of our Heads*, we may in ſome meaſure conceive how terrible a Thing it will be to appear before a Judge ſo infinitely knowing; and conclude, that not even the ſmalleſt Circumſtance of the longeſt Life will paſs without being ſtrictly examined by him.

We muſt therefore conſider the infinite Knowledge of God as a vaſt Book, in which all our Thoughts, Words, and Deeds, with every Circumſtance relating to them, are diſtinctly and particularly ſet down: Nothing will be forgot, nothing omitted,

omitted, nothing diſguiſed; not even the moſt ſecret Intentions and Motives upon which we have acted: And in the Moment we appear before the ſacred Tribunal, *this Book will be open'd*, as St. *John* expreſſes it, and give us as clear a View of all the Particulars of our Lives, as if we ſaw them written in the Beams of the Sun: *Ordinabuntur ante infœlicem animam omnia peccata ſua*, ſays St. *Auſtin*, Serm. 181; that this, *the unhappy Sinner ſhall ſee his Sins ranged in exact Order before him:* Not only thoſe, that have been committed in publick, but thoſe alſo which he has induſtriouſly conceal'd from the Eyes of Men. *There is nothing cover'd*, ſays Chriſt, *that ſhall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that ſhall not be known.* All his Hypocriſy will be unmask'd, and his Works of Darkneſs expoſed in the cleareſt Light: For *Darkneſs*, ſays the Royal Prophet, *ſhall not be hid from thee, and Night ſhall be enlighten'd like Day.* The Sins of Youth, which have been long forgot by the Criminal, will be preſented as freſh before him as if they had been committed that very Day: *Becauſe a thouſand Years are before God's Eyes like Yeſterday, which is juſt paſt*; and thoſe, which have been overlooked, either through culpable Ignorance, or wilful Neglect, will appear on Account, not according

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to the erroneous Judgment made of them, by a biaſs'd and partial Conſcience, but as they are in themſelves, and the unerring Judgment of God.

But this is not all: For not only the Sins we have committed, but alſo the Duties we have omitted, and the Favours we have received, and not profited by, will be brought to light, and an Account demanded of them: They are all faithfully ſet down in the great Book of Accounts, and neither the Number of Years we have lived, nor the Variety of Circumſtances through which our Lives have paſſed, will in the leaſt perplex the Evidence, or confound the exact Order with which they will be produced againſt us. *The unhappy Sinner will ſee all his Sins ranged in Order before him.*

Here all the Time we have imbezel'd or miſpent, the Talents we have buried under Ground, the temporal Bleſſings we have abuſed, and the Graces we have neglected, will be manifeſted with the utmoſt convincing Evidence. And ſince there is no State of Life, but has many Duties incumbent on it, the Omiſſion of thoſe Duties will be a ſeparate Article in the Indictment brought againſt us: Many Perſons, free, perhaps, from Sins in their private Lives, will be found great Sinners, when

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conſider'd in their publick Capacities. *A Prince, a Magiſtrate, a Paſtor, a Parent*, or *Maſter of a Family*, have many more beſides themſelves to anſwer for: Abuſes in a Government or Community, that might and ought to have been reform'd, will be charged upon the Magiſtrate or Superior, by whom they have been tolerated or connived at; ſinful Diſorders not corrected in a Family, will be placed on Account to the Maſter or Miſtreſs of it, tho' they were not perſonally guilty of them; Children loſt by the Neglect of their Parents will be required at their Hands. And ſo it will be in relation to all the reſpective Duties of the Station in which God has placed us.

Hence it appears, how terrible a Thing it will be for a Sinner dying in Impenitence, to fall into the Hands of an omniſcient Judge, who with a Ray of that infinite Light in which he dwells, will diſſipate in an Inſtant all the Darkneſs he has not only lived in but indulged, and diſcover to him, at one ſingle View, the whole State of his unhappy Soul. Oh! what a dreadful Sight will it be for an unfortunate Criminal to ſee, not only all his own perſonal Sins committed from the firſt Uſe of Reaſon to his dying Day, all the Abuſes of God's Favours, and all the Omiſſions he has ever been

been guilty of, but over and above all, the Sins of others, to which he has been acceſſary, placed before him, all at once, in ſo clear a Light, that it will be impoſſible for him either to deny, excuſe, or anſwer any one ſingle Point laid to his Charge.

We may in ſome Meaſure conceive the Terror, Confuſion, and Deſpair this will cauſe in a criminal Soul, if we but conſider, what a Torment it is to a Conſcience charged with many Crimes, to enter ſeriouſly into itſelf, even in this Life. For ſince Men are uſually afraid to look their Sins in the Face, and do what they can to turn their Thoughts away from them; ſince it is evident from Experience, that a guilty Conſcience, whoſe Remorſes cannot be avoided, is a kind of Hell upon Earth, and that the Anguiſh and Terror of it has driven ſome to the moſt violent Extremities even in this World, where there is always Hope of Mercy, where there are many Intervals of Eaſe, where no Man can ſee the whole Number of his Sins at once, nor any one of them in it's full Deformity: This, I ſay, being the Caſe of a criminal Conſcience, even in this World, what an unſpeakable Torture will it be to a Sinner dying in Impenitence, when in the Moment that Death cloſes the Eyes of his Body, and opens thoſe of his Soul, he

ſees,

ſees, at a ſingle View, that vaſt Multitude of Sins, with which his Conſeience ſtands charged, clearly and diſtinctly before him, attended with all the aggravating Circumſtances, which are often more enormous, and cauſe a heavier Load of Confuſion, than the Sins themſelves; and all this without any Hopes of Mercy or Comfort! Becauſe the ſame Light, which diſcovers to him the Number and Enormity of his Sins, makes him alſo clearly ſee his Doom, and everlaſting Excluſion from all farther Share in the Mercies of God.

I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe with two practical Reflections. The firſt regards thoſe, who ſeem to be well enough at eaſe, ſo they can but hide their Sins from the Knowledge of Men, and therefore ſtick not to do thoſe Things before the all-ſeeing Eyes of God, which they would certainly forbear to do, if they but ſuſpected that they were within the Obſervation of the meaneſt Creature upon Earth. Now, tho' we muſt allow that this cautious Way of ſinning is at leaſt a Mark that they who practiſe it have not loſt all Shame (which is always a commendable Quality, and prevents the Guilt of publick Scandal) yet we cannot but ſay, that their proceeding is very unaccountable, in that they are ſo much aw'd by meer human Reſpects, and the Fear of Confuſion

Confuſion before Men, and have at the ſame time no Regard to the Knowledge and Judgment of God, whom they know to be actually preſent to, and an Eye-witneſs of, every Sin they commit.

Theſe therefore ought to reflect frequently and ſeriouſly upon the following Truths: 1. That whenever they ſin, tho' never ſo ſecretly, 'tis in the Preſence of Him who is one Day to be their Judge. 2. That he not only knows all their Sins, but keeps an Account of them, and lays them up againſt the *Day of Wrath*, to be then brought to light, to their eternal Confuſion. 3. That it avails them nothing to keep up a Reputation with Men, whilſt at the ſame time they forfeit the Favour and Eſteem of God, by whoſe Judgment alone they muſt ſtand or fall. *Laſtly*, That after all they will be diſappointed, even as to what they ſeem to take moſt to Heart, *viz.* the Concealment of their Sins from Men. Becauſe, in the laſt *General Judgment*, every thing will be made known, and even their moſt ſecret Sins expoſed to the View of all Mankind. If theſe Truths were deeply imprinted in Men's Hearts, and not only believed, but ſenſibly felt by them, which can only be the Effect of a long and ſerious Meditation, it is not to be doubted, but they would by Degrees become a happy

py Reſtraint even upon the moſt violent Inclinations, and make Men at leaſt as much afraid to tranſgreſs in the Preſence of Almighty God, as before a Perſon for whoſe Judgment and Eſteem they have a real Value.

My ſecond Reflection regards thoſe, who through Shame either lay aſide the Uſe of the Sacraments, or, what is worſe, become guilty of Sacrilege, by the Concealment of ſome Sin in Confeſſion. I own, ſome Tempers, naturally baſhful and reſerved, are much to be pitied in this Point; but whatever their Difficulty may be, it muſt be overcome: And it is hard to ſay, whether the *Sin* or *Folly* in being overcome by it be greater. I ſhall hereafter treat both the one and the other at large; at preſent I ſhall only touch upon the latter, as it has a Connection with the great Truth I have laid before you, which ſets the *Folly* of this Sin in it's ſtrongeſt and cleareſt Light, and ſhews plainly that the Perſons guilty of it are no leſs wanting to Reaſon and good Senſe, than their Duty: For aſk but a Perſon of the meaneſt Capacity, when the Choice of two Evils is propoſed, which of the two is to be prefer'd, the *leſſer* or the *greater?* And he will certainly anſwer, the *leſſer.* Aſk a Criminal, whether he will rather chooſe a private Diſgrace,

or

or publick Ignominy? and you may be ſure he will not ſpend much Time in deliberating upon the Matter, becauſe a private Diſgrace is the leſſer Evil of the two.

Now this is the very Caſe of a Perſon guilty of ſome Crime committed againſt God. He muſt either ſubmit to a private Confuſion, in accuſing himſelf of it to his Confeſſor, or undergo the publick Ignominy of having it one Day expoſed, to his eternal Shame and Confuſion, before the Eyes of all the World. One of the two muſt be; and he has it now in his Power to chooſe either the one or the other. The firſt is but a momentary Confuſion, follow'd immediately by an entire Repoſe and Eaſe of Conſcience; and ſo private, that no Man alive but his Confeſſor can have any Knowledge of it. The other is a publick Diſgrace, in the Face of God, and all his Saints and Angels. And the violent Impreſſion of Shame and Confuſion, which it makes upon the Soul in that Moment, will laſt for all Eternity. I aſk then, whether a Perſon can pretend to be in his right Senſes, if he prefers the latter? The Caſe is too plain againſt him to admit of a Diſpute.

Let us then beſeech Almighty God to imprint in our Hearts ſo deep a Senſe of his infinite Knowledge, and the ſtrict Account

count we ſhall be called to, that whether we be in publick or private, in Company or alone, we may be afraid to do any thing diſpleaſing to his pure Eyes, and for which we ſhall be expoſed to everlaſting Confuſion hereafter.

The Tenth Entertainment.

Two other Qualities of the Judge.

He will render to every one according to his Deeds, Rom. ii. 6.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe I promiſed to conſider three Things in the Judge before whom we are to appear: 1. His infinite Knowledge, from which nothing can be concealed: 2. His being the very Perſon whom we offend by every Sin we commit: and, 3. His being infinitely juſt. I have already ſpoken of the firſt. The two latter Conſiderations ſhall therefore be the Subject of this Entertainment.

We ſhall be able to conceive, in ſome meaſure, how great a Terror it will be to appear before a Judge, who is the very Perſon that has been offended and injured by us, if we but conſider the Repugnance all Men naturally have to ſee thoſe to whom

whom they have done any remarkable Injury or Affront. A Perſon who is conſcious to himſelf of having been notoriouſly ungrateful to his Benefactor, ſuffers a ſenſible Mortification in appearing before him. His Bluſhes betray the inward Shame and Trouble of his Mind; becauſe the Preſence and Sight of his Benefactor revive in it the Idea of his Favours, and the ill Returns he has made for them. A Wife, that has abuſed the Conjugal Bed, unleſs ſhe be an abandoned Creature, and loſt to all Shame, cannot bear the Sight of her Huſband, if ſhe knows for certain that he is informed of the Injuſtice ſhe has done him. So a Subject, who has betray'd his Prince, dreads nothing more than to appear before him; becauſe his very Preſence is a Reproach to his guilty Conſcience, and upbraids him with the Foulneſs of his Crime. Thus *Adam* had no ſooner eaten the forbidden Fruit, but he hid himſelf from the Face of the Lord; and that which till then had been his greateſt Glory and Delight, became all on a ſudden his greateſt Terror.

But the Hiſtory of *Joſeph* and his Brothers affords one of the moſt remarkable Inſtances of this Truth. You all know how they contrived his Death; but upon the Remonſtrances of *Judah*, ſold him to certain

certain Merchants, who carried him away into *Egypt*, and there ſold him for a Slave; where ſome Years after he was, by God's Providence, raiſed to the higheſt Dignity, and made Superintendant of all *Egypt*. At which time, by the ſame Diſpoſition of Providence, there happened a great Dearth all the World over, and *Joſeph*'s Brothers amongſt others were obliged to go into *Egypt* to buy Corn of him. He knew them all at the very firſt Interview, but was not known by them till ſome Days after he diſcovered himſelf in the following Manner: Having ordered thoſe who were preſent to withdraw, and being alone with his Brothers, he gave full Vent to the Tenderneſs of his Heart, and burſting out into a Flood of Tears, he only ſpoke theſe kind Words to them: *Fear not, I am your Brother* Joſeph: *Is my Father ſtill alive?* At which Diſcovery of himſelf, tho' in ſo tender a Manner, the Scripture tells us, they were all ſtruck dumb with exceſſive Fear. *Non poterant reſpondere fratres, nimio terrore perterriti.* The unexpected Sight of a Brother, and that in ſuch happy Circumſtances, which would have cauſed a Tranſport of Joy in others, ſeized them with Terror and Confuſion; becauſe his Preſence revived in an Inſtant as freſh a Remembrance of all the Injuſtice

tice they had done him, as if they had committed it that very Day.

This is a weak Repreſentation of what will happen to reprobate Sinners in the Moment that Chriſt ſhall manifeſt himſelf viſibly to them: For as the Sight of him, all Glorious, Impaſſible, and Immortal, will be the Glory, Joy and Comfort of the Elect, ſo will it be the Terror of the Wicked. *Videntes turbabuntur timore horribili:* Seeing him they ſhall be ſtruck with a dreadful Fear, ſays the Word of God; becauſe they ſhall ſee in him a *Benefactor*, whom they have repaid with Ingratitude; a *Spouſe*, whom they have abuſed; a *Sovereign*, whom they have betrayed; and a *Brother*, whom they have many times ſold for ſordid Intereſt or brutal Pleaſure.

But he will not then ſay to them as *Joſeph* did, *Fear not, I am your Brother*, nor ſhed Tears of Compaſſion over them; but, on the contrary, the very Terror and Majeſty of his Looks will in an Inſtant convince them, that he, who till then has been their injured *Saviour* and *Redeemer*, is now come to be their *Judge*. *Horrende apparebit*, ſays the wiſe Man: *He will appear to them in a dreadful Manner*. He will then ſhew them the *precious Blood* they have *trampled upon*, by their ſacrilegious Communions; the

the ſacred Body they have *crucified afreſh, and put to open Shame*, by their ſcandalous Lives; and the Wounds of his Hands and Feet and ſacred Side, which they have *renewed* a thouſand times by their enormous Crimes. St. *Auſtin* repreſents him ſpeaking to them in this Manner: *Videte vulnera, quæ inflixiſtis, agnoſcite latus, quod pupugiſtis:* That is, *See the Wounds you inflicted, ſee the Side you have pierced.* Oh! what a dreadful Sight will this be! The Sight of a Judge, who has been deſpiſed, mocked, and crucified by the Criminal whoſe Doom he is going to pronounce: The Sight of a Judge, who knows every aggravating Circumſtance of all the Crimes he has ever committed againſt him: Finally, the Sight of a Judge, who is *infinitely juſt*, and will accordingly do himſelf Juſtice to the utmoſt Rigour.

Now this laſt Quality, I mean, his *infinite Juſtice*, added to the two former, renders the Caſe of a Perſon dying in mortal Sin, and ſummoned before the Tribunal of Chriſt, not only frightful beyond Imagination, but utterly deſperate: For tho' his Judge were *infinitely knowing*, tho' he were the *Party offended* in all his Crimes, yet if there were ſtill room for Mercy, if the Judge were capable of being either biaſſed by Intereſt or Inclination, or moved with Compaſſion, to mitigate at leaſt the Sentence, and not

pronounce againſt him according to the utmoſt Rigour of Juſtice, this would be at leaſt ſome Comfort. But the Judge is not only juſt, but *infinitely juſt*; and an *infinite Juſtice*, joined with an *infinite Knowledge* of the Merits of the Cauſe, excludes all Hopes of any milder Sentence, than preciſely what the Number and Quality of his Sins have deſerved: Becauſe Juſtice, as it regards the Office of a Judge, is a Virtue which determines him to beſtow Rewards, and inflict Puniſhments, exactly proportioned to the Merits of the Cauſe he has before him. So that the greateſt Saint will be judged by Chriſt with the ſame Exactneſs and Equality of Juſtice as the greateſt Sinner: Becauſe, as St. *Paul* tells us, *he will render to every Man according to his Works.*

In this World indeed Things are not ſo. Juſtice is often perverted, either through the Weakneſs or Corruption of the Judge: And ſo it happens many times, that Innocence is oppreſſed, and Wickedneſs rewarded, or at leaſt unpuniſhed. But ſuppoſe Juſtice were always adminiſter'd impartially, yet in this World there would ſeldom be an exact Equality between the Puniſhment and the Crime: becauſe this Equality is wholly unknown to Men, which by Conſequence makes moſt human

Laws

Laws defective; and where the Rule itſelf is defective, the Practice guided by it muſt be ſo too. So that the Juſtice of this World is but a faint Shadow of that of the other, where every thing will be according to exact Weight and Meaſure: And therefore, as every Saint in Heaven will poſſeſs a Degree of Glory exactly proportioned to the Merits of his paſt good Works, ſo will every damn'd Soul in Hell have his Degree of Torments meaſured out to him with the moſt exact Proportion to the Number, Quality, and each aggravating Circumſtance of his Sins. *Quantum fuit in deliciis, tantum date illi tormenta*; that is, *as much as he has been in Delights, ſo much Torment let him ſuffer*, will be the Doom of *Babylon*, and of every reprobate Soul: And this exact Proportion will be determined in the very Inſtant that the criminal Soul appears before the Tribunal of Chriſt.

Neither will he have the leaſt Regard to the Riches, Titles, or Dignity of any Perſon; for *there is no Reſpect of Perſons with God*, who hates Sin, and will puniſh it with equal Rigour wherever he finds it. So that before the great Tribunal there will be no other Diſtinction between King and Subjects, Maſter and Servants, but that which is grounded upon the Merits or De-

merits of their Lives paſt. Nay, *Greatneſs* and *Wealth* will rather entitle the Poſſeſſors to a ſeverer Judgment: becauſe they are *Talents*, with which they were intruſted, and an Account will be demanded, whether they have employ'd them to the Benefit or Prejudice of their own and Neighbours Souls. A great Man is generally either a *great Good* or a *great Evil* to Mankind, and the Inſtrument either of God's *Wrath* or *Mercy* on thoſe who depend upon him: And therefore as he ſeldom goes unattended either to Hell or Heaven, ſo his Reward will be the greater in proportion to the Number he has helped to ſave, and his Torments will likewiſe receive an additional Increaſe on the ſcore of every Perſon, to whoſe Damnation he has been acceſſary by the Power and Influence of his Example, or otherwiſe. And ſo this ſacred Oracle, *potentes potenter tormenta patientur*, that is, *the mighty ſhall ſuffer mighty Torments*, which makes their Greatneſs the Meaſure of the Puniſhment, will be fully verified of them.

Thus will the infinite Juſtice of God exert itſelf in the laſt Day, by inflicting Puniſhments with an equal and impartial Hand, and demanding of every Man the laſt Farthing of the Debt he has contracted. And this Debt will be computed not only

only by the Number and Quality of the Sins he has committed and not ſatisfied for, but alſo by the Benefits he has received whether temporal or ſpiritual; of which there will be a dreadful Example in thoſe Cities, where Chriſt preached, and wrought many Miracles without Fruit; ſince he himſelf, who is to be their Judge, has already pronounced this terrible Sentence upon them, that even the wicked Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrha, will in the Day of Judgment be more favourably treated than they:* becauſe that ſignal Bleſſing of his Preaching, and working Miracles amongſt them, being a *Talent* received, and not improved, muſt be accounted for, and will but ſerve to inflame the Reckoning. And therefore as it will aggravate the Debt contracted by their other Sins, ſo will it in the ſame Proportion increaſe their Puniſhment. And this will alſo be the unhappy Caſe of reprobate *Chriſtians*, who having received and abuſed Favours for ſurpaſſing thoſe of the *Jews*, will by Conſequence receive a far ſeverer Judgment than they, and be the moſt unfortunate of all human Creatures.

Nor is this exact Severity of God's *Juſtice* in the other World any ways derogating from that *infinite Mercy* ſo much extoll'd in Holy Writ. For as God is infinite in all his Attributes, ſo his Mercy is

that peculiar one, by which he chiefly delights to manifeſt himſelf to Men, during the Courſe of this mortal Life. *His Mercies* (ſays the Royal Prophet) *are above all his Works.* And even his *Omnipotence* (according to a celebrated Prayer of the Church) ſhews itſelf in nothing ſo much as in the *Works of his Mercy.* But ſince all outward Communications of the divine Attributes in this World are created Effects, and all created Effects are limited, it follows that that tho' God's Mercy be infinite in itſelf, it has it's ſtinted Bounds in relation to his Creatures. The Source itſelf is inexhauſtible, and flows inceſſantly upon all Men in this Life, whether Saints or Sinners, tho' not with the ſame Profuſion. But the whole Courſe of its Stream is in an Inſtant turn'd away from a Sinner dying in Impenitence.

So that the whole Life of Man may properly be call'd the Time of Mercy. No Sinner's Caſe is ſo deſperate, but God has provided Remedies for it. His Arms are ſtretched out to receive him. The Fountains of Grace are always open, and the ſacred Blood of Chriſt, which they contain, ſuffices to waſh away the blackeſt Crimes. So that nothing but his own perverſe Will can hinder him from applying its infinite Virtue to itſelf, and becoming Partaker of

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the *plentiful Redemption* which he has prepared for all. Now thoſe are all undoubted Inſtances of an infinite Mercy. But the Fruit and Application of it, in relation to the Soul of any impenitent Sinner, ceaſes in the very Moment that the Breath goeth out of his Body. He enters then into another World, where *Juſtice* takes place, and performs its Part, as *Mercy* did in the moſt bountiful manner, whilſt he was in a State to be Partaker of it. But having been deaf to the very laſt to all its Calls and Solicitations, he then falls into the Hands of rigorous Juſtice; is ſummon'd before its ſacred Tribunal, and receives his unchangeable Doom preciſely according to his Works.

For this Reaſon, the laſt Day is never mention'd in Holy Scripture, but in Terms proper to ſtrike the Heart with Terror. It is called the *Day of Wrath. A Day of Calamity and Diſtreſs. A Day exceedingly bitter.* But why is it that the Word of God has repreſented a Day, on which our eternal Intereſt depends, and is by Conſequence ſo terrible in itſelf, in ſuch frightful Colours, as ſeem to heighten rather than mitigate the Terror of it? Is it to throw us into Deſpair, or weaken our Confidence in the Mercies of our divine Redeemer? By no Means. On the contrary, the only End it aims at is to ſeaſon our Souls

with a wholſome Fear. That Fear, I ſay, which the *Pſalmiſt* calls the *Beginning of Wiſdom:* That Fear, which keeps the Ballance of the Soul equally poiſed between *Preſumption* and *Deſpair:* Finally, that Fear, which naturally puts us upon our guard againſt the Danger that threatens us, and by ſpurring us on to a vigorous War againſt Sin, and the Practice of good Works, lays the Foundation of a ſolid Confidence in God, and a ſincere Love of him.

Hence the Pſalmiſt calls the *Man bleſſed, who fears the Lord, becauſe he ſhall take great Delight in his Commandments.* And the Wiſe Man tells us, that *Fear ſhall delight the Heart.* But how is this? ſince we find by Experience, that what we do out of Fear, is rather a painful Conſtraint upon Nature, than a Source of Delight or Pleaſure. But the Anſwer is clear and eaſy. For, tho' it be certainly true, that if the whole Work of our Salvation were to be carried on by meer *ſervile Fear*, we ſhould find but little Comfort in the Path of God's Commandments; yet if we conſider, that we are not to ſtop there, but paſs on to a better Diſpoſition; if we conſider, that *Fear* is but the Harbinger of *Love*, and prepares the Way to it, by removing Obſtacles, and applying us to the proper Means to introduce it, we ſhall have no Difficulty

Difficulty to conceive that *Fear* is no Enemy to true Pleaſure, that is, to the ſolid Repoſe of our Souls; but, on the contrary, is wholly in its Intereſt, as being an Inſtrument, Encourager, and Promoter of it.

The Reaſon, therefore, why Fear is ſaid to be the *Beginning of Wiſdom*, and a Source of *Delight* to the Soul, is, becauſe what is firſt begun by *Fear* is improved gradually, and perfected by *Love*. Fear is as the Centinel that gives the firſt Alarm, and warns us of the approaching Danger. But whilſt we are fighting for God's Cauſe with the Arms of Prayer, and other Holy Exerciſes proper for our ſpiritual Combat, Love comes in, and takes the command into his Hands, and when Love commands in the Heart, every Thing is perform'd with Delight; ſo that Fear is as neceſſary to ſecure our Souls, as Centinels and advanced Guards are neceſſary to ſecure an Army, when an Enemy is near. Which made the Wiſe Man declare, that it is impoſſible to be juſtified without Fear. *Qui ſine timore eſt non poterit juſtificari.* Eccl. i. *ver.* 28.

In effect, the firſt ſtep to a Sinner's Converſion is uſually owing to a lively Apprehenſion of the Severity of God's Judgments. This gives a Check to the Violence of his

Paſſions. This makes him ſolicitous to diſcover and practiſe the Means neceſſary to avoid the dreadful Evils that threaten him. His practiſing theſe Means enlightens by Degrees his Underſtanding, ſoftens the Heart, and inflames the Will. And ſo it is that *Love* is introduced, and accompliſhes the Work of Salvation, which was at firſt begun through meer *ſervile Fear.*

If therefore upon hearing or reading a ſevere Truth any one finds himſelf ſeized with Fear, let not that diſhearten him; it is a good Symptom, and he has Reaſon to hope in God's Mercies, becauſe he fears his Juſtice. *Pierce my Heart with thy Fear* was the Prayer of the *Royal Prophet.* For it is God himſelf inſpires us with this Diſpoſition, for our greater Security; ſince thoſe who are abandon'd by him neither fear him nor deſire to fear him; becauſe it diſturbs their Pleaſures, and Self-love is uneaſy with it; but the Love of God finds its Account in it, in being not only introduced, but fortified and ſecured by it.

We ought therefore to fear God, that we may love him, and we ought never to ceaſe to fear him, that we may never ceaſe to love him. The more we fear him now, the greater will our Security be, when we come to die. *Timenti, Dominum bene erit in extre mis,* ſays Solomon; *he who fears the Lord,*

Lord, will be eaſy in the End of his Days. And when Death ſummons him to appear before the Tribunal of Chriſt, he will ſtand before him, not with the Terror of a Criminal going to receive the Sentence of eternal Death, but with the Confidence of a faithful Servant, expecting the full Recompence of his paſt Labours, in the Enjoyment of a happy Eternity.

The Eleventh ENTERTAINMENT.

The Examination to be made of our hidden Sins.

I am not conſcious to myſelf of any Thing; yet am I not hereby juſtified: But he that judgeth me is the Lord. 1 Cor. iv. 4.

THIS was ſpoke by a Saint of the firſt Claſs, who after his Converſion devoted himſelf wholly to the Service of *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Holy Church. His Labours and Sufferings for the Planting of the Goſpel were without Intermiſſion; and nothing but the moſt ardent Zeal for the Honour and Intereſt of his Maſter could have ſupported him under the many Hardſhips, Outrages, and Perſecutions to which his ſacred Miniſtry continually expoſed.

him

him. God had alſo manifeſted his Holineſs by many Miracles, and his Raviſhment to the third Heaven was an undoubted Pledge of the high Degree of Favour to which God had raiſed him; yet amidſt the eminent Virtues that ſhined in him, the faithful Diſcharge of his laborious Miniſtry, and the Favours God had heap'd upon him, joined with a Conſcience entirely free from Reproach, this great Saint was not without ſome Fear of the Judgments of the *Searcher of Hearts*; as appears from the forementioned Words of my Text: *I am not*, ſays he, *conſcious to myſelf of any thing: yet I am not hereby juſtified. But he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

This contains a very uſeful and inſtructive Leſſon, warning us not to be over confident of ourſelves, whatever Virtue we may ſeem to poſſeſs. There are many Chriſtians (and it were to be wiſh'd the Number were far greater) who, tho' inferiour by many Degrees to the Merits of St. *Paul*, yet leading a kind of regular and innocent Life, may in ſome meaſure ſay with him, that *they are not conſcious to themſelves of any thing*; that is, of any noted Crime, or remarkable Tranſgreſſion of the Law of God. But can this give them an entire Security of being *juſtified?* St. *Paul* ſays poſitively it cannot, *becauſe he that judgeth me is the Lord.* Hence

Hence it follows manifeſtly, that there are *hidden Sins* known to God alone, for which however we are to be accountable to him. The proud *Phariſee*, mentioned in the Goſpel, was not conſcious to himſelf of any Thing: Nay, he had a great Opinion of his own Virtue and Merits. Yet we all know how criminal he was in the Sight of God. The Caſe of the Biſhop of *Laodicea*, mention'd in the third Chapter of the *Revelations*, was much the ſame: For he was fully ſatisfied with the State he was in, imagining himſelf to be *Rich* in Grace and Merits. Whereas the Searcher of Hearts order'd St. *John* to let him know, that he was *wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Rev. iii. 17.

Thus many are apt to over-rate their own Merits, and be miſlead by it into a Security, which uſually becomes the Mother of Sloth, Tepidity, and Preſumption. They ſee themſelves free from the cuſtomary Vices of Mankind (and 'tis doubtleſs a Bleſſing to be highly valued, and acknowledged with the deepeſt Senſe of Gratitude; but they conſider not with St. *Paul*, that *he who judgeth is the Lord*, and that by Conſequence there may be many Defects and Blemiſhes in their Souls, which eſcape their Notice, but cannot eſcape the pure and all-diſcerning Eyes of him who will judge them

them, not according to what they appear to themſelves or others, but according to what they really are. I ſhall therefore, in this Entertainment, lay down ſome genuine Reaſons, for which the moſt virtuous, in Appearance, may miſtruſt themſelves on the ſcore of *hidden Sins*, whereof there will be a ſtrict Examination made on the great Day of Accounts.

There are two Sorts of hidden Sins, which will be placed to our Account at the Day of Judgment. *Firſt*, thoſe which we know to be Sins, but through Heedleſsneſs ſeldom obſerve ourſelves to be guilty of them. And, 2*dly*, Thoſe which we commit with ſufficient Reflection, but perſwade ourſelves to be no Sins. As to the former Sort, which are occaſion'd by Heedleſsneſs, and Want of Care, every one may make ſome gueſs to what Degree he may be concerned in them, by only reflecting in what meaſure he has been wanting in his Endeavours to prevent them. For they that live in a State of Idleneſs, indulging themſelves in all the dangerous Liberties of the World, or are naturally of a negligent and heedleſs Temper, and take no care to arm themſelves againſt this Evil; theſe, I ſay, may reaſonably ſuſpect themſelves accountable for many ſecret Sins:

1. Of

1. Of *Omiſſion*, particularly in the Neglect of Duties relating to their reſpective State or Calling.

2. Of *Thought*, by being guilty of many raſh Judgments to the Prejudice of their Neighbour; by Thoughts of Revenge, or ſuch as are contrary to Chriſtian Purity; by ill Wiſhes, or unlawful Deſires, and the like.

3. Of the *Tongue*, by Back-biting or worldly Diſcourſes; by ſpreading or improving uncharitable Reports, and ſo forth; to ſay nothing of the many Sins they may be guilty of, by performing the beſt Part of their Actions purely upon Motives of Self-Intereſt, Vanity, or other human Reſpects: For if even thoſe, who keep a conſtant Watch upon themſelves, are nevertheleſs apt not only to be ſurpriſed into but even to overlook many of the Sins here mentioned, how jealous ought they to be of themſelves, who live without Care, ſpeak without Caution, let their Thoughts and Tongues run at random, and ſeldom look into themſelves to obſerve the Motions and Intentions of their Hearts? Truly, it is morally impoſſible but Perſons of this Character muſt fall into many Sins of which they have no Knowledge; or if at Times ſome Checks of Conſcience ſerve as Monitors to give them Notice of what they

they are thinking or ſaying amiſs, theſe generally go off without leaving any laſting Impreſſion, being either ſtifled or diverted by other Thoughts crowding in upon them. And whereas theſe careleſs and ſlothful Chriſtians ſeldom give themſelves the Trouble of a diligent Examination of Conſcience at Night, by Means whereof the moſt conſiderable Failings of each Day might be diſcovered, and laid up ſafe in their Memories, in order to be brought to a more rigorous Account in their next Confeſſion; the unavoidable Conſequence of this Neglect is, that many even of thoſe Sins, which they took notice of in the committing, go by Degrees out of their Minds, and ſo perhaps are never more thought of, till Death and Judgment brings them to light. And tho' God alone, who is to be the Judge, can tell in what meaſure Sins thus overlooked or forgot will be laid to their Charge, 'tis certain, however, that the more wilful the Neglect has been, the leſs room there will be for Mercy, unleſs heartily repented of, and amended in due Time.

Now as to what relates to thoſe *hidden Sins*, which we commit with ſufficient Reflection, but perſuade ourſelves to be no Sins, the Root of theſe is a *culpable* or *affected Ignorance*, occaſioned either by *Neglect*,

Neglect, *Inſincerity*, *Prevention*, or the *Deluſion of Self-love*: For the clearer underſtanding whereof, we are to obſerve, that there are two ſorts of *Ignorance*, *viz.* an *invincible* and a *culpable* one. A Perſon is ſaid to labour under an *invincible Ignorance*, when he never had it in his Power to inform himſelf of the Truth: And this Ignorance being without any Fault on his Side, excuſes from Sin; nor will any Omiſſions or Tranſgreſſions occaſioned by it be laid to his Charge.

But a Perſon is *culpably ignorant*, when it is his own Fault that he knows no better; and this is the Caſe of all thoſe who either wilfully ſhut their Eyes againſt the Truth, or out of *Sloth*, and Want of Concern for their Souls, neglect the ordinary Means appointed by Providence for their being ſufficiently inſtructed in their Duty. Now 'tis a great Miſtake to imagine, that this Ignorance will be any Excuſe in Favour of thoſe who are concerned in it; becauſe it is their own Fault, if they tranſgreſs for want of knowing their Duty; ſince they might have known it, had they but taken care to inform themſelves: And therefore, as their Ignorance is wilful, ſo all the Miſcarriages occaſioned by it are alſo wilful, and by conſequence inexcuſable.

But

But as *Neglect*, or Want of Care, is the Occaſion of Ignorance in ſome, ſo *Inſincerity* is a no leſs ordinary Root of it in others. Many ſeem very ſolicitous to know what is lawful or unlawful in certain doubtful Caſes: They pretend to take Advice, and ſhew a Readineſs to follow it; but being inſincere at Heart, and rather afraid than really deſirous to know the Truth, they uſe Double-dealing in their pretended Search of it, by miſ-ſtating their Caſe, and either adding ſome material Circumſtance which wholly diſguiſes the true Nature of it, or concealing ſomething which might give Light to thoſe they conſult. By this Means their Directors, who have no Reaſon to miſtruſt any ſuch unfair Dealing, are impoſed upon; and misjudging their Caſe, give their Opinion or Advice accordingly: And thus, inſtead of ſhewing them the Way to Heaven, are the innocent Occaſion of their being miſlead, or confirmed in their former Errors. But tho' the deluded Directors be innocent in this Caſe, thoſe who trapan them into an Approbation of what is really unwarrantable, are far from being ſo; and tho' they may in ſome meaſure ſtifle the Murmurs of Conſcience, by fooliſhly perſuading themſelves that they act according to the Direction or Conſent of their Spiritual Guides, their pretended Ignorance, under which they imagine

imagine to ſhelter themſelves, will avail them nothing at the great Day of Accounts, and all their Tranſgreſſions occaſioned by it ſtand in full againſt them.

Another fruitful Source of hidden Sins is a *ſtrong Prevention*, imbibed either by Education, or the Diſcourſes of Perſons whoſe Judgment, and even Virtue, we have a great Opinion of. This was the Caſe of the *Jewiſh People*, who having a great Opinion of the Learning and Virtue of the *Phariſees*, were, by their Diſcourſes and malicious Inſinuations, ſo violently prepoſſeſſed againſt our Bleſſed Saviour, that they even demanded his Death. 'Tis true, this Prevention may be very innocent, as long as it regards only *indifferent Things* or *Opinions*, and is not heighten'd into a Party-Zeal, ſo as to cauſe warm Diſputes, whereby Charity is often wounded. But if it regards the Reputation of any Perſon, or, what is worſe, of a great Number of Perſons, and is at the ſame time wholly groundleſs, and by conſequence unjuſt, as it often happens, then 'tis far from being innocent: Nay, 'tis the Root of numberleſs Sins; 1*ſt*, Becauſe Perſons under this Prevention ſeldom make any ſcruple of entertaining the moſt raſh and uncharitable Judgments of thoſe againſt whom they are thus prepoſſeſſed; and, 2*dly*, Becauſe theſe raſh

raſh Judgments are the immediate Source of innumerable Defamations, whereby Perſons of ſolid Virtue and Merit have often been ruined both in their Reputation and Fortune, and thereby render'd incapable of being ſerviceable to their Neighbour in the Station wherein Providence has placed them. And will the God of Juſtice leave ſuch crying Injuſtices unpuniſhed! Or will they be excuſed by a pretended Ignorance! I fear not, as long as the Parties concerned ſtop their Ears to every thing that may diſabuſe them of their Error, and have them only open to hear Reports proper to nouriſh and ſtrengthen their Prevention; which renders their Ignorance wholly inexcuſable, becauſe they have it in their Power to be delivered from it if they pleaſe.

A fourth Root of culpable Ignorance is, any *irregular Inclination* or *ſecret Paſſion* in the Soul; for every Degree of Paſſion being attended with a proportionable Degree of Spiritual Blindneſs, the Judgment is always more or leſs biaſs'd or corrupted by it, and prepoſſeſſed in Favour of it; and ſo if any Doubt ariſes concerning what is lawful or unlawful, it is ever apt to lean on that Side which flatters the favourite Inclination. Thus an erroneous Conſcience is formed by Degrees, the *Goſpel* is

is accommodated to corrupt Nature, and the *narrow Way* to Heaven is made broad enough for Self-love to walk in; yet Conſcience is all the while pretended to be the Guide; and ſo it is; but it is a Conſcience of their forming, who ſtudy to deceive themſelves, and is therefore modelled in all Things ſuitably to the Inclination that is to be gratified.

'Tis according to this ſort of Conſcience, that many make no ſcruple at all to wrong their Creditors, and often put them to the greateſt Hardſhips, by refuſing or unreaſonably delaying to pay their Debts; which however is, in many Caſes, the ſame Injuſtice as cheating or robbing them of their Money. 'Tis according to the ſame ſort of Conſcience, that many ſtick not to employ the moſt unfair and illegal Means to make their Fortune, or increaſe their Wealth. Their only Care is not to come within the Reach of human Laws; but they conſider not, that they muſt one Day appear before a Tribunal, where *he that judgeth is the Lord.* Finally, 'tis according to this ſort of Conſcience, that many, having their Hearts fixed upon the World, indulging themſelves in all its dangerous Pleaſures, and living almoſt in a total Forgetfulneſs of Almighty God, and Neglect of the Duties relating to him, yet think all is well

well, and cry thoſe down as indiſcreetly rigid, who profeſs and teach a ſtricter Morality. And what is the Root of all this wilful and affected Ignorance, but ſome ſecret Paſſion in the Soul, which being a falſe Biaſs upon the Judgment, inclines it to approve or think favourably of every thing that flatters that Paſſion? And thus they walk on blindly in the Way of Perdition, in hopes to meet Heaven at the End of it, till Death opens their Eyes, and ſhews them the fatal Error they have lived under.

The laſt great Root of *hidden Sins* is a *ſlothful* and *lukewarm* Temper, which eaſily betrays thoſe who are guilty of it even to Sins whereby God's Grace may be forfeited, and that without their being aware of it; for if we examine the Nature of *Sloth*, we ſhall find that a conſiderable Degree of it, eſpecially when it becomes an habitual Indiſpoſition, ſuffices alone to create a Miſtruſt of the State of a Soul infected with it. The Reaſon is, becauſe a conſiderable Degree of Sloth ſeems altogether inconſiſtent with two of the moſt eſſential Duties of a Chriſtian, *viz. the Love of God above all Things*, and the Obligation he has to *ſeek firſt the Kingdom of God.*

That it ſeems wholly inconſiſtent with the Love of God above all Things, appears plainly from the very Oppoſition of their

their Natures and Effects, which run all directly counter to one another; for Sloth is *indifferent*, *languid*, and *unactive* in every thing that has a Relation to God; always inclining us to our Eaſe and Satisfaction; whereas the Love of God, when it is Miſtreſs of the Heart, is *eager*, *watchful*, *vigorous*, and *active* in all the Concerns of Eternity: It renders us ſolicitous to know the Will of God, ready to obey it, and deſirous to pleaſe him in all Things: In effect, whomſoever we love with an abſolute Preference to all others, we are always ſolicitous to ſerve and pleaſe; and therefore, when little or nothing of this appears in relation to God, 'tis a ſtrong Symptom that the Love of him is not the prevailing Diſpoſition of the Heart.

The ſame is to be ſaid in reference to the great Duty incumbent on all Chriſtians, of *ſeeking firſt the Kingdom of God*; for how can the ſlothful Chriſtian, who performs all Duties that have an immediate relation to God in a careleſs manner, be ſaid to make Heaven his chief Concern? Or with what Probability can we judge it to be the principal Object of his Deſires, when we ſee him languid and indifferent in the Purſuit of it? Change but the Caſe from Heaven to the World, and ſee whether an earneſt Deſire of it's Goods be ever

ever without an earneſt and vigorous Application to obtain them. Does a Man, that thirſts after Intereſt or Honour, leave any Means untried that favour his Deſires, or Obſtacle unremoved that ſtands in his Way? Does he not uſe all Endeavours poſſible to compaſs the End he aims at? And take all Precautions neceſſary to prevent a Diſappointment? Theſe are doubtleſs the Methods of the Children of this World; and the Reaſon is, becauſe their Deſires are eager, and eager Deſires admit of no Indifference or Sloth. They naturally inſpire the Soul with Vigour, put Life into her, and ſpur her on to Action, allowing her no Reſt till all be done that can contribute to render them ſucceſsful.

And is there not then Ground enough to conclude the *Kingdom of God* is not very earneſtly deſired, when nothing of this Spirit, Life, and Vigour appears towards the gaining of it; but, on the contrary, every thing is carried on with Coldneſs, Negligence, and Sloth? The Conſequence is but too clear; and there follows another no leſs clearly from it, *viz.* that however a Perſon of this Character may value himſelf upon his Virtue, he has Reaſon enough to miſtruſt the State of his Soul, eſpecially if to the two fore-mention'd Conſiderations be

be added the Danger ſuch a one is in of coming often indiſpoſed to the *Sacrament.*

The Reaſon is, becauſe conſidering the Habits ſuch a one has of doing Things negligently and by halves, 'tis much to be feared the ſame lazy and ſlothful Humour follows him moſtly even to the Tribunal of Penance: And is there not then great Danger of ſuch a one's coming to it wholly indiſpoſed? The Caſe is but too clear: For ſince, of all the Duties of a Chriſtian, his receiving the Sacraments is of the greateſt Importance, and requires a very ſerious Preparation, what Encouragement have we to hope this from one, who is ever inclined to conſult his Eaſe, and give way to the Suggeſtions of Sloth? Is there not, on the contrary, Reaſon enough to apprehend ſuch a one will be faulty either in the due Examination of Conſcience, or the Sorrow he ought to have? ſince theſe are Taſks which require a more ſerious Application, than a Perſon, accuſtomed to indulge his Sloth, will probably uſe to perform them as he ought.

However, 'tis here neceſſary to obſerve, that what has been ſaid (particularly concerning the Danger of abuſing the Sacraments) regards not Perſons of a *timorous* or *tender* Conſcience, as appears plainly from the Character I have given of thoſe

who alone are concern'd in it: For Perſons of a timorous Conſcience are always apt to overdo their Duty rather than fall ſhort of it. Their chief Fault is too much Solicitude rather than Neglect; and their predominant Weakneſs is an immoderate Fear, which is ſo apt to make them run into Exceſſes on the *right ſide*, that they are in no Danger of erring on the *Left*: Nay if there be any Danger in their State, it conſiſts in their being for the moſt Part too ſtiff and poſitive in the unfavourable Judgment they make of themſelves, and not paying the Submiſſion they ought to their Directors, who are better able to judge of their Condition than they themſelves. Becauſe an *exceſſive Fear* is no leſs apt to ſet Things in a falſe Light, and impoſe upon the Judgment, than *Preſumption*: And therefore thoſe, who are told by their Directors that they are ſubject to this Weakneſs, ought to be convinced that terrifying Truths are not intended for them, but for thoſe alone, who, tho' careleſs and ſlothful in performing all Duties, yet live without Fear, and are therefore in danger of going on in the ſame ſlothful Way, and good Opinion of themſelves, till Death preſents them before the Tribunal of the great Searcher

Searcher of Hearts, before whom *nothing is cover'd that ſhall not be reveal'd, nor hid, that ſhall not be known.* Matt. x. 26.

The Twelfth Entertainment.

Concerning the Account to be given of other Men's Sins.

Cleanſe me from my hidden Sins, O Lord; and from the Guilt of other Men's Sins deliver thy Servant. Pſal. xviii. 13.

THIS was the humble Prayer of the *Royal Prophet*, who was ſolicitous to obtain God's pardon not only for his own perſonal Sins, but thoſe alſo to which he had been any ways acceſſary in others. And who is there amongſt us, that does not ſtand in need of this Mercy? who dares confidently ſay his Soul is clear, or that he has nothing to anſwer for his Neighbour's Sins? what Parents, or Heads of Families, or Perſons in any other Poſt of Authority, and intruſted with the Care of others, are ſure they have not either by Words or Actions, or at leaſt by Neglect, been an Occaſion of Sin to thoſe that are committed to

their Charge? Nay, is there any one that has the Aſſurance to affirm, that even in the ordinary Commerce of human Life and common Converſation, he has always been ſo watchful over himſelf, as never to have prejudiced his Neighbour's Soul by Diſcourſe or Example? I dare boldly call it a Preſumption in any Man to make this poſitive Judgment of himſelf.

However, ſince moſt Chriſtians have but a very weak Idea of this Truth, and ſeem to be ſecure enough on that ſide, I ſhall in this Entertainment lay before you the many Ways there are of drawing on ourſelves the Guilt of other Men's Sins: of which there will be a ſtrict Examination made, and for which we ſhall be accountable at the great Day of Aſſizes.

All Sins of Thought, as long as they are ſtifled within our own Breaſts, and are neither manifeſted by Word nor Action, being incapable of influencing our Neighbour, are purely perſonal, and conſequently foreign to the Subject of this Diſcourſe. But there is not any Sin of the Tongue, nor any ſinful Action, but if practiſed in Company may in ſome meaſure be an Occaſion of Sin to others, either by being an immediate Inducement, or by preparing at leaſt the remote Diſpoſitions to it. The Reaſon is, becauſe all ſort of Example being of it's own

own Nature an Encouragement to Imitation, as is evident from Experience, it follows, that as good Example is an Inducement to Virtue, ſo bad Example is naturally an Incentive to Vice, and can never be wholly free from Infection. And therefore as Perſons that carry an infectious Diſtemper about them are apt to communicate it to thoſe they converſe with, whether they deſign it or not; ſo all ſinning in the Preſence of others is catching in ſome Degree, whether it be deſign'd as a Snare, or done without any ſuch Intention.

Hence it is that thoſe, who are remarkably given to any Vice of the Tongue, as *Curſing and Swearing*, *Detraction*, *Prophaneneſs*, or *immodeſt Language*, or are ſubject to the Sin of *Drunkenneſs*, have ſomething more to anſwer for than the bare Guilt of theſe Sins, conſider'd nakedly in themſelves. Becauſe all Sins of this ſort, being committed in publick, are by Conſequence generally attended with the additional Guilt of Scandal, in their being an Encouragement to all that are preſent, to commit the ſame. For Men are naturally embolden'd to venture at what they ſee others do before them. We contract a certain Familiarity with Sin by ſeeing it often committed: We are wean'd by Degrees from the Horror we had to it. What ſtartled us

at firſt, becomes inoffenſive by Uſe, and when we are once reconciled to Vice in others, we have but an eaſy Step to make to it ourſelves. So that whoſoever has been much concern'd in the foremention'd Vices, or others that are publick, can never be ſecure of not having a great deal to anſwer for on the ſcore of his Neighbour, tho' he never was guilty of expreſsly ſoliciting him to ſin, or doing any Thing with a premeditated Deſign to draw him into it. Becauſe he knows not what Miſchief his Example alone may have done, how far it may have ſpread, or what Impreſſion it may have left behind.

However, this Reaſon holds particularly, when the Example is given by thoſe that are in Authority, or whoſe Superiority or Station in a Family makes them remarkable. For then it carries a more powerful Malignity, in not only being an Encouragement to Vice, but giving a ſort of Credit and Reputation to it. Hence 'tis no wonder that where the Heads of Families are diſorderly, the Servants ſhould affect, or at leaſt not fear to be ſo too: Or that Children, who daily hear their Parents curſe and ſwear, or ſee them often in Drink, ſhould as they grow up inherit theſe Vices of them. For conſidering how prone all Mankind is to Imitation, and particularly how

how apt all Children are to imitate their Parents, as being brought up from their Cradles with a great Eſteem and Reſpect for them, how is it poſſible but the Example of Parents ſhould have the greateſt Influence imaginable upon them, either to Good or Evil.

This Conſideration ought to make all Parents wary even to a nicety what they either ſay or do before their Children; becauſe whatever they ſay or do carries weight with it. And ſince the tender Minds of Children are very ſuſceptible of Impreſſions, and the firſt Impreſſions are generally moſt laſting, eſpecially ſuch as have corrupt Nature to help them to ſink the deeper, all Parents that reſolve to diſcharge their Duty, and fully anſwer the Truſt that is lodg'd in them, ought to be careful to ſet their Children no other Example, than what they may ſafely follow, nor let them be Witneſs of any Thing, but what may contribute to inſpire them with a Senſe of Piety and Virtue; and ſo lead them inſenſibly into the Way of God's Commandments. For without this Caution they can never be ſecure of their not having been inſtrumental to ſuch Miſcarriages as may afterwards befall them; or that the Ruin of their Souls, if that ſhould be

Ruin of their Souls, if that ſhould be their unhappy Lot, be not laid at their Doors.

But to return to my Subject; beſides this way of encouraging Sin by Example, I fear all thoſe will ſcarce be found leſs criminal, who tho' they give no Scandal in any Part of their own Lives, yet through Neglect or Sloth take no care to prevent the Growth of Sin in others under their Charge. And here again all Parents will be found guilty, who either let their Children grow up without providing them ſufficient Inſtruction, or through exceſſive Fondneſs either wholly overlook their Faults, or have not Courage enough to correct thoſe they obſerve in them.

2*dly*, all Maſters or Miſtreſſes of Families, who either countenance or tolerate Abuſes and Irregularities in their Servants, which the Authority they have over them obliges them to remedy by a due and ſeaſonable Method. So that the Perſons here mention'd, tho' they may be free from perſonal Sins, and very edifying in their own Lives, yet by being ill Parents, or careleſs Maſters, may be found guilty, in the ſight of God, of the Sins of others, which by their Watchfulneſs and Care they might and ought to have prevented.

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The ſevere Puniſhment inflicted on the high Prieſt *Heli*, is a terrible Inſtance of this Truth. For the Scripture does not accuſe him of any perſonal Irregularity: But his Children were guilty of very notorious ones, which gave great Scandal. The Father indeed chid them mildly for it. But out of Fondneſs natural to Parents had not the Courage to chaſtiſe them as their Crime deſerved. Whereupon Almighty God firſt ſent a Prophet to denounce to him the Judgments that ſhould befall him and his whole Family; and ſoon after reveal'd the ſame Things to *Samuel*, ſaying to him, *Behold I will do a Thing in Iſrael, at which both the Ears of every one that heareth it ſhall tingle. In that Day I will perform againſt* Heli *all the Things which I have ſpoken concerning his Houſe. When I begin I will make an End. For I have told him that I will judge his Houſe for ever for Iniquity, becauſe he knew that his Sons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrain'd them not. And therefore I have ſworn unto the Houſe of HELI, that the Iniquity of HELI'S Houſe ſhall not be purged with ſacrifice, nor Offering, for ever.* This was the Sentence pronounced by God againſt *HELI* and his Family; which was ſoon after executed with the utmoſt Rigour, and ought to be a Warning to all thoſe who are in Authori-

ty, not to draw upon themſelves, by a criminal Connivance or Neglect, the Sins of thoſe whom God has committed to their Charge.

But now, if even thoſe, who but encourage Sin by their Example, or hinder it not when they ought, will be found guilty of their Neighbour's Miſcarriages, what a dreadful Load of other Men's Sins do they then heap upon themſelves, who are not content to ſhew them the way of Iniquity, or ſtand ſtill to ſee them run headlong into it, but even drag them forcibly to it by commanding, perſuading, counſelling, ſoliciting, threatning, or otherwiſe provoking them to it? Theſe indeed are ſuch profeſs'd Agents and Miniſters of *Satan*, that it is not to be doubted, but as they now ſerve him in ſo eminent a Poſt, ſo will they hereafter receive their Reward accordingly. They are like thoſe Heads and Ringleaders of Rebellion, who fight not only in Perſon againſt their Sovereign, but levy Forces againſt him; and their Sin, like that *Devil* mention'd by St. *Mark*, may properly be call'd *Legion*. But there being ſeveral Degrees of this Sin too foul to be mention'd, I ſhall only touch upon ſome few Branches of it, of an inferiour Malice; becauſe theſe being comparatively leſs enormous, are ſlighted by many, and ſcarce reputed Sins.

Firſt

Firſt then, all thoſe are here concern'd, who in Diſcourſe maintain any Principle or Maxim contrary to the Doctrine of the Goſpel: Such as is, for Example, the Lawfulneſs of revenging an Affront. Nor are they leſs guilty, who applaud them that do it, running out at large in Commendation of their Bravery and Courage; or vilify thoſe, who decline it. For this is nothing leſs than preaching up Vice to the Company, and exhorting them to practiſe what is flatly condemn'd by the Laws both of God and Man.

2*dly*, They that put bad Books into the Hands particularly of young Perſons. I mean, Books tending either to Prophaneneſs, Immodeſty, or any other ſort of Immorality.

3*dly*, They who ſow Diſcord, and by carrying Stories to and fro either cauſe Miſunderſtandings, or widen Breaches already made. Perſons of this Humour are meer Firebrands in a Family, the very Bane of human Society, and deſerve to have a Mark of Infamy ſet upon them, that all may be upon their Guard againſt them.

4*thly*, They are guilty, at leaſt in ſome Degree, who by Flattery and affected Praiſes contribute to inſpire their Neighbour with a vain Conceit of himſelf, and thereby increaſe the principal Deſtemper of human

human Nature. For we all know that Pride is the reigning Diſeaſe of Mankind; nay, the Root of all other Evils; and that every one brings but too large a Share of it into the World. We alſo find ſufficiently by Experience, that Flatteries and Praiſes are the greateſt Fomenters of this Vice. Now then, ſince Charity obliges all Men even to remedy, as far as in them lies, and much more not to augment their Neighbour's Evils, how comes it that in this particular Inſtance the contrary is everywhere practiſed without ſcruple? We applaud, magnify, and extoll him before his Face, and think no harm is done, yet are all the while infuſing a moſt dangerous Poiſon into him, nouriſhing his natural Pride, and working him up into an exorbitant Opinion of himſelf. And is all this no Sin? Truly, if prejudicing our Neighbour in his Body be a Sin, I cannot well ſee, how wilfully contributing to prejudice his Soul ſhould be an innocent Thing.

5thly, and laſtly, Thoſe are undoubtedly guilty of a very grievous Sin of Scandal, who by repeated Importunities preſs others to drink to Exceſs, and when they have prevail'd upon their Weakneſs, triumph as if they returned loaden with the Spoils of a conquered Foe. 'Tis of theſe *Solomon* tells

tells us, *that they are glad when they have done ill, and rejoice in the moſt wicked Things.* But what a ſtrange Part is this for a Chriſtian to act! firſt to be the wilful Author of his Neighbour's Sin, and then to ſport with the Miſchief he has done? Is ſinning then a jeſting Matter? is Murdering Souls a Trifle to ſport with, and Degrading Men into Beaſts a proper Subject of Merriment and Laughter? This is not only to affront God, by defacing his ſacred Image, but looks like inſulting over him, and adding Contumely to Impiety.

Beſides, who ſees not the ill Conſequence of making Vice a Matter of Diverſion and Mirth? For can any thing contribute more effectually to leſſen the Deformity and Heinouſneſs of it, than to ſee it play'd and jeſted with, as if it were nothing more than an ordinary Paſtime? If any one ſhould ſeriouſly maintain, that Drunkenneſs is a becoming Quality, his Diſcourſe would paſs for a Satire upon it. But to ſport and laugh with it is to plead for it in earneſt; becauſe there needs no more to recommend it, than to make it appear a harmleſs or indifferent Thing: Now, whatever Men make the Subject of a Jeſt, is ſuppoſed to be ſo.

Hence I cannot but accuſe thoſe of Indiſcretion, who when their Friends have been

diſ-

diſorder'd with Drink, jeſt as familiarly with them upon that Subject, as if they had only been concerned in ſome innocent Frolick. Whereas ſinning mortally is too ſerious a Subject to droll upon, and ought either to be ſeriouſly reproved, or where that Freedom is unſeaſonable, it is better to be ſilent than to prejudice the Cauſe of Virtue by leſſening the Deformity of Vice, which all jeſting and laughing with it naturally tends to. In a word, it is equally dangerous jeſting either with Virtue or Vice: For it does an Injury to the one, and a Credit to the other, by putting them both upon the level with Toys and Trifles.

Now therefore to conclude, ſince there are ſo many Ways of drawing on ourſelves the Guilt of other Men's Sins, every one has Reaſon enough to live under a continual Fear of appearing before that dreadful Tribunal, where ſo ſevere an Account will be demanded not only of our own but our Neighbour's Tranſgreſſions. I own it is very painful to Nature to be always in Fear. But let Nature be uneaſy, ſhe may comfort herſelf with conſidering, that *Working our Salvation in Fear and Trembling* is adviſed by St. *Paul* as the ſafeſt Way we can walk in. And the Reaſon is evident, *Firſt*, becauſe the Fear of God's Judgments is a continual Curb upon corrupt Nature, and renders

renders us watchful not to ſay or do any thing that may hereafter riſe in Judgment againſt us. And, 2*dly*, becauſe it is the Mother of Humility, and a ſovereign Preſervative againſt thoſe dangerous Suggeſtions of Vanity, which ſome may be expoſed to on the Score of their pretended Innocence: Thoſe I mean, who not being conſcious of any conſiderable perſonal Sins, which doubtleſs is a moſt ſignal Bleſſing, are apt to grow too ſecure, and even preſumptious of God's Favour; not reflecting that they are perhaps to be accountable for other Men's Actions as well as their own; and that being clear from any conſiderable perſonal Sins, they know not how far they may be concern'd in thoſe of their Neighbour.

For tho' perhaps they never have encouraged Sin by their ill Example, are they ſure they have not done it by their Connivance, Silence, or Neglect? Tho' they never puſh'd nor dragg'd their Neighbour to the Precipice, have they always been watchful to draw him from it, when they could and ought to do it? Have they never flatter'd his Pride and Vanity for private Ends? have they never encouraged Detraction by ſhewing a Satisfaction to hear it, nor broached Diſcourſes with Deſign to have ſome one brought upon the Stage? Finally, have they not by their vain and worldly Diſcourſes con-

contributed to inſpire their Neighbour with a Love of the World and it's dangerous Pleaſures? Now, if they cannot with a full Aſſurance plead not guilty to any of theſe Articles, what have they elſe to do but humble themſelves daily under the omnipotent Hand of God, and, throwing themſelves wholly upon his infinite Mercies, beſeech him with the *Royal Prophet* not to charge them with the Guilt of other Men's Sins. And leſs than this no Chriſtian can do without Danger of Preſumption.

But they who have been notoriouſly guilty of propagating Vice in any kind whatſoever, whether by Perſuaſion or Example, have ſomething elſe to do. For there is alſo a Reparation and Atonement due to their Neighbour whom they have injured by their Scandal; and the beſt Reparation they can make is to do what they can to become now as ſerviceable to Virtue as they have once been to Vice. And how muſt this be done but by being now as edifying in their Lives, as they were ſcandalous before; by ſhewing upon all Occaſions their Abhorrence of their former Sins, and by promoting every where, both by Diſcourſe and Example, particularly the Virtues oppoſite to thoſe Vices for which they have formerly been moſt remarkable, and whereby they have chiefly prejudiced their Neighbour.

bour. For by this Method the Satisfaction will bear ſome Proportion to the Injuſtice done. And they will have Reaſon to hope that Almighty God, who is infinite in Mercy as well as Juſtice, ſeeing their earneſt Deſire, and hearty Endeavours to make the beſt amends they can for what is paſt, and finding them as zealous now in his Cauſe, as they were once Enemies to it, will look upon them with Compaſſion, cancel the great Debt they had contracted, both by their own and Neighbour's Sins, and reverſe the Sentence he had decreed againſt them.

The XIIIth Entertainment.

Of HELL.

Of the Pain of *Senſe* in General.

Every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit ſhall be cut down, and caſt into the Fire, Matt. iii. 10.

HAving already gone through the moſt important Truths relating to *Death* and *Judgment*, I ſhall now begin to ſpeak of the Puniſhments and Rewards of the Life to come. Concerning which I ſhall be careful not to advance any thing but what is either grounded upon the Word of God, or taught by Divines, or drawn from Principles which ſeem to be beyond Diſpute. But I ſhall firſt premiſe a Reflection, which appears neceſ-

neceſſary in relation to ſuch reveal'd Truths as are above our Comprehenſion, and which according to the elegant Figure of St. *Paul*, *we ſee but in Part, and in a Glaſs darkly*, 1. Cor. xiii. 12. amongſt which are the two reveal'd Truths concerning the Puniſhments and Rewards of the Life to come.

Now in handling Truths of this nature, it is impoſſible to carry our Expreſſions up to what they really are. The very ableſt Pen or Tongue can no more repreſent them as they are in themſelves, than the moſt ſkilful Painter can ſet forth the vaſt and beautiful Orb of the Sun in its full natural Proportion and Luſtre. For our Words can at beſt but keep Pace with our Thoughts, but never go beyond them. We cannot expreſs more than we can conceive. And therefore, ſince the Nature of thoſe Truths is above the Reach of human Underſtanding; ſince as St. *Paul* tells us, they can only be conceived *in Part, and as in a Glaſs darkly*, it follows, that even when they are ſet forth to their greateſt Advantage, they are only expreſs'd in the ſame dark and imperfect Manner: and by Conſequence, whatever Strength of Words and Ornaments of Eloquence are employed to repreſent ſuch Truths, we muſt always form this Judgment, that they are infinitely greater in themſelves than they are repreſented: becauſe the Ideas we have of them come

come undoubtedly very ſhort of their real Objects; and our Expreſſions being but the painting of our Ideas, and, as it were, ſecond-hand Copies of the Objects themſelves, muſt needs repreſent them at leaſt as imperfectly as they are conceived in our Thoughts.

This Reflection therefore muſt be carried on through every Part of the Subject I am now entering upon. The Word of God itſelf tells us of the Joys of Heaven, *that the Eye has not ſeen, neither has the Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for thoſe that love him.* And the ſame muſt be ſaid of the Pains of Hell prepared for them that live and die in the State of Sin. It is impoſſible to conceive, much leſs to expreſs, either the one or the other. Our Faith muſt ſupply the Defect of our Underſtanding, and convince us, that as no Joy or Pleaſure of this World can bear any Proportion to that of the bleſſed Souls in Heaven, ſo the acuteſt Pains that ever were or can be endured in this Life, are but imaginary ones, and not worth ſpeaking of, if compared with the Torments of the Damn'd in Hell.

I ſhall begin with theſe according to the Method of ſpiritual Writers, who uſually conſider them under two general Heads, call'd by Divines the *Pain of Senſe*, and the *Pain of Loſs*. Under the firſt Head are con-

contain'd all Evils that affect the Senſes; and under the ſecond all interiour Pains of the Soul cauſed by *Grief*, *Anguiſh*, *Deſpair*, *Shame*, *Hatred*, *Envy*, and the *violent Cravings* of Paſſions never to be ſatisfied. I ſhall now ſpeak only of the *Pain of Senſe* in general; and ſince a Perſon dying in the State of Sin is from that very Inſtant condemn'd to *Hell-fire*, which cauſes the moſt grievous Pain of that Sort, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that a damn'd Soul ſuffers the Pain of Senſe independently of the Re-union of the Body; and is by Conſequence the Fuel of *Hell-fire* as well before as after the general Reſurrection; which ſhall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

According to the vulgar Way of thinking, we are apt to fancy that we ſhould eaſily form ſome Idea of the *Pain of Senſe*, if the Soul immediately after Death were again united to the Body. But we have a Difficulty to conceive how this Sort of Pain is conſiſtent with the State of Separation. For the Pain of Senſe is no other, than that which we ſuffer by all or ſome one of our five Senſes, and how can the Soul be capable of Senſation, when ſhe is ſtript of all the natural Organs of her Senſes? Can ſhe ſee without Eyes, hear without Ears, feel without Fleſh and Blood, and ſo forth? But this Difficulty is chiefly owing

owing to a Want of true Ideas of the different Natures of the Soul and Body, the two Parts whereof Man is compoſed.

Firſt then, as to the Body, we muſt conſider, that this Part of Man, even whilſt it is inform'd and animated by the Soul, is nothing but *meer Matter*, as having been originally form'd of Earth; and meer Matter can never be a Principle of *Life* any more than a Log of Wood, nor by Conſequence of *Senſation*. But the Soul is a ſpiritual Subſtance created immediately by the Hand of God, and is itſelf the ſole Principle both of *Senſation* and *Reaſon*. Hence both ſpiritual and ſcholaſtick Writers conceive two different Parts in the Soul; one of which they call the *inferior* or *ſenſitive* Part; the other, the *ſuperior* or *rational* Part; which is a manifeſt Proof of their attributing *Senſation* as well as *Reaſoning* to the Soul alone. However, their Meaning is not that there are two Parts really diſtinct in the Soul, but only two different Denominations attributed to the ſame ſpiritual Subſtance, as ſhe is the Root or Principle both of *ſenſitive* and *intellectual* Operations in whatever State ſhe be, and whether ſhe acts in Conjunction with or ſeparately from the Body.

'Tis true, Almighty God has order'd human Nature ſo, that the Soul, during her State

State of Union in this Life ſhall be incapable of any Exerciſe either of her intellectual or ſenſitive Faculties without the Miniſtry of the Body; ſo that as a Man can neither think nor reaſon without Brains, ſo neither can ſhe *ſee*, nor *hear*, nor *feel*, nor *taſte*, nor *ſmell*, without the reſpective *Organs* made by the Author of Nature to be ſubſervient to theſe *ſenſitive* Operations.

But tho' the Soul be thus made to depend upon the Miniſtry of the Body, and is without it unable in this World to exert herſelf in any Functions of Life, whether *Senſation* or *Reaſon*, yet this is but an accidental Condition of her preſent State, but no Part of her Eſſence. For the Soul is eſſentially a ſpiritual Subſtance, unalterable in her Nature, and the ſeveral Parts of the Body are but her Tools and Inſtruments to work with in this Life. When that is ended, ſhe changes not her Eſſence, but her State; as a Man who throws off his Cloaths or Shackles, is the ſame human Nature he was before. And therefore as the Soul, whilſt united to the Body, is by her Eſſence and Nature the ſole Principle not only of *intellectual* but of all *vital* and *ſenſitive* Operations; ſince the Body only furniſhes the material Organs adapted to her preſent State of Conjunction with it; it follows, that after their Separation, whilſt the Body, according

to

to its corruptible Nature returns to Earth, the Soul cannot but continue to be what ſhe is by Eſſence, the ſame Source and Principle both of *Reaſon* and *Senſation.*

This is manifeſt as to the *Intellectual* Part of the Soul, ſince both Philoſophers and Divines agree, that her intellectual Powers act with much greater Strength and Vivacity in her State of Separation, than they can poſſibly do under the Clog and Incumbrances of the Body. The ſame is no leſs evident as to the Senſe of *Feeling.* For no Man of ſound Principles doubts, but that a damned Soul is tormented by *Hell-fire* from the very Inſtant of her Condemnation; and it is manifeſted from the Words of the *rich Glutton* in Hell. But if the Soul ſeparated from the Body had no Senſe of *Feeling*, Hell-fire could not torment her. For let it be never ſo violent or active in it's Nature, it cannot be a Cauſe of Pain, unleſs it acts upon a Subject that can feel it: And therefore, ſince there is no Reaſon to doubt but that a Soul ſeparated from the Body has a Senſe of *Feeling*, there ſeems to be as little Reaſon to doubt, but that ſenſitive Powers, namely, thoſe of *hearing*, *ſeeing*, *ſmelling*, and *taſting*, are likewiſe inſeparable from her Eſſence; tho' their reſpective Functions be doubtleſs performed after a different

Manner

Manner according to the Difference of her immaterial and incorruptible State, into which ſhe enters immediately after her Diſſolution.

So that if any one aſks me, how the Soul can *ſee* without *Eyes*, or *hear* without *Ears*, and of the reſt; I anſwer him, by aſking likewiſe, how ſhe can *think*, *underſtand*, and *reaſon* without Brains? ſince there appears no greater Difficulty in the one than in the other. In effect, all the Difficulty that appears, ariſes wholly from an Error of Imagination in attributing that to the Body, which really belongs to the Soul, when they are united together. For we imagine the Organs of the Senſes to be the Senſes themſelves, which I conceive to be a great Miſtake. The Organs of Senſation are indeed in the Body, but the Senſation itſelf is in the Soul. And tho' according to the vulgar way of ſpeaking we ſay that the Eyes ſee, and the Ears hear, yet the *Eyes* and *Ears* are no more the Senſes of *ſeeing* and *hearing*, than the Windows, through which the Light paſſes, are the Light itſelf; for the true Meaning of it is no other, than that the Ideas of the reſpective Objects of *Sight* and *Hearing* are conveyed to the Soul through the Eyes and Ears, as the Light of the Sun is convey'd to us through the Windows.

'Tis

'Tis true indeed, that, according to the Condition of the Soul in this Life, material Objects cannot make Impreſſions upon us, nor affect us either with Pain or Pleaſure, otherwiſe than by making their way to the Soul by the Miniſtry of the corporeal Organs: But the radical Source itſelf both of Seeing, Hearing, and other Senſations, which are all Operations of Life, is inherent in the Soul alone, is a Part of her very Subſtance, and ſo imbibed in her Nature as to be inſeparable from it.

This is not all; but we muſt farther obſerve, that the Soul, whilſt ſhe is united to, and acts in Conjunction with the Body, is by all ſpiritual Writers conſider'd as under a State of *Confinement*. The Body is uſually call'd her *Priſon*, and all thoſe numberleſs organical Parts, on which ſhe depends, both in her ſenſitive and intellectual Capacity, are to be conſider'd no otherwiſe than as ſo many *Chains* or *Shackles*, which cramp her natural Powers, and hinder them from exerting themſelves with their full Vivacity and Strength. They are indeed of neceſſary Uſe with relation to her preſent State; but 'tis like the Uſe of Crutches to a Cripple. For the Soul united to the Body cannot indeed move or act without them; as a Cripple during his State of Infirmity cannot walk without Crutches. But her State of

Union is a State of Weakneſs, and, as long as it laſts, all the Motions and Operations of the Soul are lame, weak, and languid. But as a Cripple reſtored to the natural Uſe of his Limbs moves with much greater Strength and Swiftneſs, than whilſt he is confined to Crutches; ſo when the Soul is deliver'd by Death from the Chains and Incumbrance of the Body, all her Powers are, as it were, ſet at liberty: She acts without Reſtraint, and exerts herſelf with the utmoſt Extent of her natural Force. Her Underſtanding is enlarged, to give her a full Knowledge of her eternal State, and of every thing that contributes to render it happy or unhappy. All her Ideas are clear and diſtinct; becauſe the Objects that excite them meet with no Interpoſition of Matter to clog or weaken the Impreſſions they make upon her. They act upon her immediately without being obliged to force their Way through Fleſh and Blood to come at her; ſo that all her Senſations and Movements are attended with an Acuteneſs and Violence far ſuperiour to what ſhe can have in this World; and (if I may be allow'd to make uſe of a familiar Compariſon) we may truly ſay, that as Blows are more ſenſible and painful to a naked Body, than to one cover'd with thick Cloaths, ſo the

Pains

Pains of a Soul ſtripped naked of the Body are infinitely more acute and violent than any ſhe can here endure under the groſs and material Cover of Fleſh and Blood.

From theſe Reflections it follows, that by a wonderful providential Diſpoſition of divine Juſtice, every Part or Faculty of the Soul will, even in her State of Separation, be a diſtinct Source of ſome accidental Increaſe of Puniſhment or Reward, according as it has been a Source of virtuous or ſinful Actions in this Life; and all her ſenſitive as well as intellectual Powers will have their Share of Torment or Pleaſure exactly proportion'd to the Sins or Virtues, of which they were made Inſtruments upon Earth.

I will not indeed pretend to explain either the particular Manner, how the Soul exerts her ſenſitive Powers in her State of Separation, or the Nature of the Objects that work upon, her or the Manner how they affect her either with Pain or Pleaſure. For tho' the Knowledge of theſe Things might ſerve to gratify our Curioſity, they are not neceſſary for our Inſtruction, or clearer Information of the Truth; it ſuffices, in this as well as many other Caſes, to know that it is a Truth, grounded upon ſolid Principles of Reaſon. But the *How*, or Manner of it is a Subject of meer barren Speculation,

and nothing to the main Purpoſe: It ſuffices, for Example, to be convinced, that a damn'd Soul ſeparated from the Body is tormented by Hell-fire, and that by Conſequence ſhe feels the Violence and Activity of the Flames that torment her; but as to the Nature of Hell-fire, as whether it be true elemental Fire, or of a different Sort from what we know in this World; or as to the Manner how it acts upon a ſpiritual Subſtance, or how a Soul unorganized can be a proper Fuel for it; theſe are meer Amuſements of human Curioſity, and indeed above the Reach of our Underſtanding.

Nay, we are almoſt as much in the dark concerning the Manner how we *ſee*, *hear*, or *feel* in this Life; for the very wiſeſt Men differ in their Opinions about it: Some ſay we *ſee* by the Emiſſion of Rays from the Eyes; others explain it by the Reception of Species from the Objects; and there is the ſame Uncertainty about the Manner of Senſation of all the other Senſes; and indeed all we are ſure of is, that we ſee with our Eyes, hear with our Ears, and ſo of the reſt. And therefore, as it would be a Madneſs to doubt of it, becauſe we know not how to explain it, ſo none but Madmen can doubt of Hell-fire, or the Grievouſneſs of the Torment it cauſes in damn'd

damn'd Souls, becauſe we cannot comprehend the *How*, or Manner of it. I heartily pray God we may never come to be made ſenſible of it by an experimental Knowledge.

But what I have ſaid concerning the Nature of Man's Soul ſeems to amount to a convincing Proof that the *Pain of Senſe* in a damn'd Soul is the ſame in both her States after this Life; that is, as well before as after the Re-union of the Body; and this I find conformable to the Sentiment of all ſpiritual Writers upon this Subject; who in explaining the Pain of Senſe, never give the leaſt Hint, as if the proper Pain of any of the Senſes were ſuſpended to the general Reſurrection; on the contrary, their uſual Method is to be very particular in ſpecifying all the different Torments of the five Senſes, and appropriating to each one, a Puniſhment ſuitable to the Nature of the Sins, whereof it has been an Inſtrument in this Life; and this without mentioning any Difference between her State of Separation from, or Re-union to the Body, or exempting a damn'd Soul from any ſenſible Pain in one State, with which ſhe is to be tormented in the other.

In effect, whoever allows the Soul to have a Senſe of Feeling in her State of Separation, muſt allow her all her other Senſes, ſince there is the ſame Reaſon for all as

for one: And therefore ſince it is above all Queſtion, that one Part of her Pain of Senſe, *viz.* her Burning in Hell, commences from the very Inſtant of her Condemnation; there is likewiſe no Reaſon to doubt but that all the other Senſes have their Share of Torment aſſigned them from the very ſame Moment. And this ſeems alſo to be moſt conformable to that exact Equality of Juſtice, which God exerciſes in the other World.

For the very Moment that a Perſon expires, he ceaſes to be in a State of meriting or demeriting; that is, from that Moment he cannot do any Thing to deſerve the leaſt Increaſe or Diminution either of Puniſhment or Reward: That very Moment alſo his Sentence is pronounced, which being infinitely juſt muſt by Conſequence be exactly proportion'd to the Number and Quality of all his paſt Sins or Virtues; allowing likewiſe for all their Conſequences, of which God has a perfect Knowledge. If therefore the Puniſhment of a Perſon condemn'd to Hell-fire were augmented after the general Reſurrection by ſome additional Pain of Senſe, it would follow, that it would then either exceed the Meaſure of his paſt Sins, or not come fully up to it in the whole Interval betwixt his Death, and the great Day of general Judgment.

Judgment. And ſince this ſeems to be inconſiſtent with the moſt obvious Notion of an infinite Juſtice, we muſt conclude that the *Pain of Senſe*, as well as that of *Loſs*, is in its full Meaſure allotted to every damn'd Soul at her very firſt Plunge into Hell-fire; and that, tho' after the Re-union of the Body, the Manner of it may be different (concerning which we are wholly in the dark) the Subſtance and Violence of her Pains are as fix'd and unchangeable as her eternal State.

Let us beſeech Almighty God to grant us the Spirit of true Penance in this Life, particularly in the Mortification of our Senſes. The dangerous Liberties, and unlawful Pleaſures we allow them now, will coſt us very dear hereafter: But if we labour to ſubdue them in this Life; if we ſubject them to the Government of Reaſon, and make them ſubſervient to Virtue, they will alſo be Partakers of the incomprehenſible Joys prepared for us in the Life to come.

The XIVth Entertainment.

A particular Account of the *Pain of Senſe.*

Caſt him into outer Darkneſs: There ſhall be Weeping, and Gnaſhing of Teeth. Matt. xxii. 13.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe I entertain'd you with ſome general Conſiderations relating to the *Pain of Senſe*; I ſhall now proceed to give you a more particular Account of it; and this ſhall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

That Part of the Puniſhment of the Damn'd, which is call'd the *Pain of Senſe*, is principally cauſed by the Nature of the *Place*, where the damn'd Souls are impriſon'd, and the unquenchable *Flames*, to which they are condemn'd.

As to the *Place* aſſign'd them for their eternal Abode, which we call *Hell*, it is unqueſtionably under Ground, and very probably in the very Center or Bowels of the Earth. St. *John* in his *Revelations* calls it the *Lake of God's Wrath:* The Prophet *Iſaiah* calls it *Tophet*, and gives this frightful Deſcription of it. *From Eternity*, ſays

ſays he, *is Tophet prepared by the King* (meaning Almighty God) *he has made it deep and large: The Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood. The Breath of the Lord like a Stream of Brimſtone doth kindle it.* And holy *Job* calls it *a Land of Darkneſs cover'd with the gloomy Shade of Death, where no Order, but eternal Horror and Confuſion dwelleth.*

Now theſe Deſcriptions are moſtly ſuitable to the Nature of a ſubterraneous Place, or Priſon under Ground. *Deepneſs* denotes its Situation; and *Darkneſs, Confuſion* and *Horror* are the natural Conſequences of it. There are beſides, many other Expreſſions in holy Writ, which favour this Belief; as that of the Pſalmiſt, *let them deſcend alive into Hell.* And 'tis related of the rich Glutton, *that he died and was buried in Hell:* Which Expreſſions, *viz. Deſcending into*, and being *buried in Hell*, naturally form in us an Idea of a Place beneath the Surface of the Earth, and far diſtant from the Seat of Bliſs.

Of which we have ſtill a farther Inſinuation in the Words of our *Creed*; tho' the *Hell* there ſpoken of be very different from that of the Damn'd: The Words I mean are theſe: *He deſcended into Hell: The third Day he roſe again, aſcended*

into Heaven, &c. For a Perſon cannot properly be ſaid to *deſcend* but from a higher Place to a lower; nor to *aſcend* but from a lower Place to one reſpectively higher: So that the Surface of the Earth is here repreſented as in a middle Situation between the Region of Darkneſs below, and the Manſions of eternal Light above: And ſince we cannot doubt but theſe are full as oppoſite in their Situation as Nature, we may confidently ſay, that the Heaven of the bleſſed Souls is the very higheſt, and the Hell of the Damn'd the very loweſt Part of the whole Creation: And that as the Elevation of the one will give an Increaſe of accidental Glory to the Elect, ſo will the Lowneſs of the other cauſe an Addition of Torment and Confuſion in the Reprobate.

But the Reaſon, whence it chiefly appears, that the *Hell of the Damn'd* is not only a Place under Ground, but in the very loweſt Caverns of the Earth, is, becauſe the *Hell*, into which *Chriſt* deſcended, was a ſubterraneous Place, as I have already remark'd; and according to theſe Words of the Apoſtle, *For who is he who aſcended, but he who deſcended firſt into the lower Parts of the Earth?* And yet the Hell of the Damn'd is ſtill much lower than this, as appears from the Hiſtory or

Parable

Parable of the *rich Glutton*, who demanding of *Abraham* a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue, was anſwer'd by him, that there was a great Gulph or Space betwixt them, which debar'd the Damn'd from receiving, and him from ſending any Comfort from the Place where he and *Lazarus* made their Abode; which doubtleſs was the Hell, or *Priſon* of the Saints of the old Law, into which our Saviour Chriſt deſcended in order to releaſe thoſe holy Captives, whom he had ranſom'd with his ſacred Blood, of which the unhappy Glutton could receive no Benefit; becauſe *in Hell* (namely, *the Hell of the Damn'd*) *there is no Redemption.*

If you aſk how Man's Soul, which is a ſpiritual Subſtance, can be confined to, or impriſon'd in a material Place; I anſwer, that there is no more Difficulty to conceive the Soul impriſon'd in a *material Place*, than to conceive her impriſon'd in a *material Body*. We all know that the Body is the *Priſon* of the Soul in this Life: And the Body is orginally but Earth turn'd into Fleſh, which after Death returns into Earth. So that a Soul condemn'd to Hell is but removed from one earthly Priſon to another; that is, from a Priſon above Ground, where Goods and Evils, Joys and Sorrows, Pleaſures and Pains, are continually interwoven, to one under Ground, where a dread-

dreadful Aggregation of all imaginable Evils is to be her everlaſting Portion.

For in the Priſon of this World ſhe ſees the beautiful Light of the Sun, is refreſh'd by the Air, and enjoys the Comfort of the other Elements: Her Senſes are entertain'd with many agreeable Objects, her Sorrows are alleviated by the Company of Friends, her Cares diverted by a great Variety of Amuſements, and the Repoſe of Night not only ſuſpends her Labours, but ſupplies her with new Strength to ſupport them. But in the Priſon of the other World every thing contributes to torment her: The very Depth and Darkneſs of the Place affects her with Horror. She has all the Pain of a Perſon buried alive, and ſtifled under the Weight of the Earth, without the Power of Dying; the Extremities both of Heat and Cold, the Apparitions of frightful Spectres, the Gnawings of Serpents and other venomous Creatures according to St. *Auſtin*; finally, the confuſed Noiſe of Curſes and Blaſphemies, Howlings and Lamentations are the everlaſting Entertainment of her Senſes; without the leaſt Interval of Repoſe, without a Friend to comfort her, or any Change of Objects to divert her from her Torments.

So that we muſt conceive the Hell of the Damn'd to be a dreadful Dungeon ſeparated from

from all Light and Air by the whole Thickneſs of the Earth, which immures it, as it were, on every Part: A Dungeon fill'd with Horror, Filth, and noiſome Stenches, and impenetrable to all Relief. In a Word, a Dungeon, where thoſe unfortunate Criminals are to be kept Priſoners for all Eternity; where they will be the everlaſting Objects of God's Wrath, the eternal Victims of his Juſtice, the Hatred and Averſion of Saints and Angels, and the Scorn and Deriſion of their implacable Tormenters.

But of all the Pains of Senſe, that which is cauſed by Hell-fire is the moſt grievous; and the Truth of it is ſo authentically atteſted in holy Writ, that no Man of ſound Principles can doubt of it. *Fire and Brimſtone* (ſays the Royal Prophet) *ſhall be a Part of their Cup. Their Worm* (ſays *Iſaiah*) *ſhall never die, and their Fire ſhall never be quenched: Whoever* (ſays St. *John* in his Revelations) *was not found written in the Book of Life, was thrown into a Pool of Fire:* And the holy *Baptiſt* made uſe of no other Argument to induce his Auditors to embrace the Baptiſm of Penance he preach'd. *The Axe* (ſays he) *is already laid to the Root: Therefore every Tree that brings not forth good Fruit ſhall be cut down, and caſt into the Fire. He will gather* (ſpeaking of

of our Saviour) *his Wheat into his Grainery, but he will burn the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.* All which is confirm'd by Chriſt himſelf, ſaying, that in the laſt Day he will pronounce this terrible Sentence againſt the Reprobate, *Go ye accurſed into everlaſting Fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels.*

Can any thing be clearer and ſtronger then theſe Expreſſions of holy Writ? Which therefore the Fathers, and other ſpiritual Writers ever underſtood in their obvious and literal Senſe; and they always took care to inculcate, that the Fire prepared for Sinners is a true and real Fire; which they therefore call the chief Miniſter of God's Wrath, the Avenger of his Cauſe, the principal Agent, Inſtrument and Executioner of the divine Juſtice. And St. *Auſtin* ſticks not to ſay, that the Fire of this World, compared to that of Hell, is no more than a *painted Fire.*

Now of all ſenſible Pains, that which is cauſed by Fire even in this World is generally eſteem'd one of the moſt violent and inſupportable. All Men have a ſtrong and lively Apprehenſion of it: Inſomuch that there is ſcarce any Death we naturally dread more than to be burnt alive, eſpecially by a ſlow Fire; which therefore never is inflicted but for the moſt enormous Crimes, or by Tyrants, who have loſt all Senſe of Huma-

Humanity. Would any one here preſent have the Courage to hold his Hand for one half Hour upon a burning Coal, tho' he were to gain a Kingdom by it? I dare ſay there is not any one, tho' never ſo poor, but would rather chuſe to continue what he is, than purchaſe a Change of Condition at ſo dear a Rate. And therefore we juſtly admire the heroick Virtue of St. *Lawrence*, who, whilſt he lay broiling on a Gridiron, jeſted with his Tormenters, and ſeem'd inſenſible of the Pain he endured. But Nature had no Share in this Action, and would doubtleſs have ſunk under the exceſſive Violence of the Pain, had not the invincible Power of divine Grace render'd him victorious over it.

If then the Fire, even of this World, cauſes a Pain ſo grievous and intolerable, that no Man would upon any worldly Conſideration endure the Violence of it for any Space of Time, how ſhall we find Words to expreſs the Grievouſneſs of the Pain which the Damn'd endure amidſt the ſcorching Flames of Hell! ſince all ſpiritual Writers affirm poſitively, that the Violence and Activity of Hell-fire ſurpaſſes beyond all Imagination that of any Fire in this World! Truly, we may ſay without Exaggeration, that even the *Babylonian Furnace*, tho' kindled ſeven times more than uſually, was rather

ther a refreſhing Gale than burning Fire, if compared with the Flames of Hell; and that St. *Lawrence*'s Gridiron would be a Bed of Roſes to a damn'd Soul.

The Reaſon of this terrible Difference is partly the Nature of Hell-fire itſelf, conſidered as an Inſtrument of divine Juſtice, and partly the Nature or Condition of the Subject upon which it acts. As to the firſt, *viz.* the Nature of Hell-fire conſider'd as an *Inſtrument of divine Juſtice*, we muſt obſerve, that whereas Fire in this World was principally ordained by God to *comfort*, *warm*, and *refreſh*; Hell-fire was on the contrary kindled by him for no other Uſe, than to *burn* and *torment*. And ſince there is not any Part of the whole Creation, that comes within our Knowledge, but is by his infinite Wiſdom perfectly adapted to the peculiar Uſe for which it is ordain'd, and endow'd with a Nature ſuitable to the Part it has to act in ſerving the Deſigns of Providence, we have Reaſon to conclude that the ſame infinite Wiſdom has alſo given to Hell-fire ſuch a Nature and Qualities, as fully anſwer the Ends for which they are made; which being no other than to puniſh and torment the Wicked with the utmoſt Rigour, it is not to be queſtion'd but Almighty God has communicated to it an Impetuoſity and Violence, which ſurpaſſes

paſſes every thing in this World, and is moſt lively expreſs'd by the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ſaying, that Hell-fire is blown upon and kindled by the Breath of the Lord. To which St. *Auſtin* likewiſe alludes, when he ſays that Hell-fire burns marvelouſly but truly, *miris ſed veris modis.*

God is indeed marvelous in all his Works. But we may truly ſay, that of all his Works, none appear more wonderful than his boundleſs Liberality in Heaven, and the Rigour of his Juſtice in Hell. In Heaven he rewards like a God, and in Hell he puniſhes like a God. In Heaven he beſtows Bleſſings without Meaſure, and in Hell he inflicts Torments without Mercy. His infinite Wiſdom and Power are employ'd in Heaven to make the bleſſed Souls compleatly happy in all the Demonſtrations of his infinite Goodneſs, and they are no leſs employ'd in Hell to make the damn'd Souls ſmart under the Rigour of his Juſtice. And whereas all God's Works in this World are a Mixture of *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, in the Life to come they are all pure Juſtice in relation to the Reprobate: For in this Life indeed, when he chaſtiſes, he does it with the Tenderneſs of a loving Father; but in the Life to come he puniſhes the Reprobate like an irreconcilable Enemy that takes Revenge, or like a Judge that

that treats a Criminal according to the Rigour of the Law, which made holy *Job*, tho' his Sufferings were ſo great, that he ſeem'd utterly abandon'd by God, expreſs his Condition by only ſaying that *the Hand of the Lord had touch'd him*, becauſe the very ſevereſt Sufferings in this World are but, as it were, ſome *gentle Touches* of the Hand of God; whereas he makes the Reprobate in Hell feel the whole Weight of his terrible Hand, giving his Wrath its full Scope, and pouring forth his Indignation upon them like an impetuous Torrent. So that we may conſider Hell-fire as a dreadful Inſtrument of Execution in the Hands of an incenſed and implacable God, revenging himſelf with it according to the full Impetuoſity and Violence of its Nature.

But the ſecond Reaſon of the exceſſive Torment it cauſes, is the Nature or Quality of the Subject upon which it acts. For, in the firſt Place, there is nothing in the Damn'd that can any way reſiſt or weaken its Activity: And Therefore the Word of God compares them to *dry Wood*, *Stubble*, or *Straw*; becauſe Fire meets with little or no Reſiſtance in Things of this Nature; as is evident from Experience. Now 'tis certain, that the leſs the Reſiſtance is of the Subject, to which Fire is applied, the greater is the Impetuoſity and Violence, with which

which it acts upon it: And conſequently where there is no Reſiſtance at all, it acts upon it with its full Force.

But the Incorruptableneſs of the Damn'd is another frightful Circumſtance, which may help to give us ſome Idea of the exceſſive Violence of their Torments. For in this World, all Manner of Pain is limited by the Mortality and Weakneſs of our Bodies; becauſe whenever any Pain exceeds a certain Degree or Meaſure of Violence, beyond what Nature can bear, it utterly deſtroys us. But in Hell, Things are not ſo; becauſe the moſt exceſſive Torments can neither deſtroy nor alter the Subject upon which Hell-fire acts. And therefore as the Pains of the Damn'd will be without End, becauſe the Subject will never be deſtroy'd, ſo will they alſo be without Diminution or Abatement, becauſe the Incorruptableneſs of their State renders them incapable of Change. So that after Millions of Millions of Years paſs'd in thoſe fiery Dungeons, and Furnaces of unquenchable Flames, the Damn'd will have as quick and feeling a Senſe of the Fire, as they had the very firſt Moment. In a word, all their Torments, tho' violent beyond Expreſſion or Imagination, will continue in their full Degree of Violence as long as Hell-fire ſhall laſt; which will be for all Eternity; ever burning without conſuming,

conſuming, ever tormenting without altering or deſtroying any Part of the miſerable Fuel upon which it acts.

I need not add any more, but leave every one to reflect, whether, conſidering the continual Uncertainty of human Life, we act not like Madmen if we continue for any Time in a State, from which if Death carries us to the other World, we are ſure to paſs to the dreadful Torments I have deſcribed. Let us beſeech Almighty God to preſerve us from this Blindneſs, and give us Grace to live ſo, that a happy Eternity may be our Reward.

The Fifteenth ENTERTAINMENT.

Of the *Pain of Loſs.*

Their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not quenched.
Mark ix. 43.

BY the *Worm*, which *dieth not*, is meant the everlaſting Sting and Gnawing of Conſcience, and the Anguiſh and Deſpair of a damn'd Soul, cauſed by the unhappy State into which ſhe is fallen. For the better Underſtanding whereof, we muſt conſider

der that a Man's Soul is created to be happy. And ſince all Creatures have a natural Tendency to the End for which they are created, it follows that a general Inclination to Happineſs is ſo imbibed in the Nature of the Soul, whatever State ſhe be in, that it is inſeparable from it. In effect, the principal View Men have in all the Hurry and Buſineſs of Life, is no other than to make themſelves as happy as they can. And whether Honour, Intereſt, or Pleaſure be the immediate Object of their Purſuits, Happineſs is the principal and ultimate End they drive at.

This Inclination therefore, being inſeparable from the very Nature and Eſſence of Man's Soul, not only follows her to the other World, but by her being then diſengaged from the Incumbrance of Fleſh and Blood, becomes far more violent and craving: And by Conſequence, if a Soul at her Separation from the Body finds herſelf utterly deprived of the Happineſs after which ſhe thirſts, the ſame Inclination, which, if gratified in the Poſſeſſion of an infinite Good, would have render'd her infinitely happy, renders her infinitely miſerable in the Loſs of it, and becomes a perpetual Food of the *Worm, which dieth not*; I mean, of that terrible Part of her Puniſhment, which Divines call the Pain

of

of Loſs, and which I intend to explain in this Entertainment.

Tho' the Picture I have hitherto drawn of Hell be very frightful, it repreſents but one half and the milder Part of the Puniſhment of a damn'd Soul; ſince Divines generally agree, that the Pain of *Loſs* is far more grievous than that of *Senſe*. This Pain conſiſts principally in the violent Impreſſions of Grief made upon the Soul for the Loſs of Heaven, and the unhappy State into which ſhe is fallen. Now whoever has at any time been under any great Oppreſſion and Load of Grief, will at leaſt be ſenſible, that the Pain of the Mind is a very grievous Torment, and ſuffices alone to render a Perſon unhappy, tho' the Body be perfectly at eaſe. So that there is this great Difference between the Sufferings of the Mind, and thoſe of the Body, that tho' the Body be never ſo much afflicted, a chearful and eaſy Mind gives it Relief. But a Heart oppreſs'd with Grief feels the whole Weight of its Affliction, which, even in this World, where the Objects that excite it are uſually inconſiderable in themſelves, becomes notwithſtanding many times ſo heavy and inſupportable, that many have laid violent Hands on themſelves to be deliver'd from it.

But

But the ſtrongeſt Proof that can be given of the violent Pain, which Grief alone can cauſe in the Soul, is our Saviour's Agony in the Garden of *Gethſemini*; where he ſuffer'd himſelf to be ſeiz'd with the heavieſt Load of Grief, that ever fell upon any mortal Man: Inſomuch that many Writers are of Opinion, that it was the moſt painful Part of all his Sufferings; and Chriſt himſelf made this Declaration of it, *that his Soul was ſorrowful even unto Death:* That is, the Grief that oppreſs'd his Heart was ſo great, that had he not miraculouſly preſerved himſelf for the Death of the Croſs, Nature could not have ſubſiſted under the Weight of it. But tho' he had not expreſs'd it in Words, the extraordinary Effect it wrought upon his ſacred Body, by throwing him into a Sweat of Blood, would have been a convincing Proof of the Violence of his Pain.

I have produced this, only as an Inſtance to convince us, that the interiour Pain of the Soul, in which the Senſes have no Share, may be a very grievous Suffering: 'Tis true indeed there never was, nor ever can be any Grief in this World equal to what our Saviour ſuffer'd; becauſe the Ideas that excited it were infinitely clearer and ſtronger than any other mortal Man is capable of. But there is a large Difference be-

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between what a Man is capable of in this Life, and the Grief of a damn'd Soul; whereof there appear three principal Roots or Cauſes. *Firſt*, the unmix'd Nature of the afflicting Objects, which excite and nouriſh the Paſſions of a damn'd Soul. 2*dly*, the clear Ideas ſhe has of thoſe afflicting Objects. And, 3*dly*, the Unchangeableneſs of her Nature, when ſhe enters into her eternal State. I ſhall touch briefly upon each.

Firſt then, the Objects, that occaſion her Grief in this Life, are either inconſiderable Trifles, or imaginary Evils, or if real ones, are never without ſome Mixture of Comfort, and may be regarded on their favourable Side: For there is ſcarce a temporal Evil, but is counterbalanced by ſome Good to ſupport an afflicted Mind: If we loſe one Friend, others remain to make up the Loſs in ſome meaſure. If we be hated by ſome, greater Number have a Kindneſs, or at leaſt an Indifference for us: When one Part of the Body is in Pain, the reſt may be at eaſe; and ſo it is proportionably in all the Sufferings of this Life: No Man's Caſe is ſo utterly deſtitute and forlorn, as to be under a total Privation of all Comfort to alleviate his Grief.

But Matters are not ſo in the other World. The

The Loſs of Heaven, in regard of a damn'd Soul, is an infinite and univerſal Loſs: A Loſs, which excludes all Mixture of Good, and comprehends an Aggregation of all Evils. For a damn'd Soul is depriv-ed of every thing ſhe deſires, and con-demn'd to every thing ſhe abhors. She is tormented in all her Powers and Senſes. She is hated by all, and pitied by none; hated not only by God and all his Saints and Angels, but even by thoſe who are to be the everlaſting Companions of her Torments. So that, what Way ſoever ſhe turns herſelf, ſhe ſees no Object before her but what is a real and ſubſtantial Evil: No Object but what is an everlaſting Source of Pain: Finally, no Object but what con-tributes to heighten her Grief.

But the clear and full Knowledge, which a Soul, ſeparated from the Body, has of all thoſe afflicting Objects, is a ſecond terrible Circumſtance, which raiſes her Grief, and other painful Paſſions, to the higheſt pitch of Violence: The Body in this World is as a dead Weight upon the Soul; all her Ideas of Things both temporal and eternal are extremely weaken'd and obſcured by it; and the Extent of her Underſtanding is re-duced within a very narrow Compaſs, as we plainly experience, in this Life. But ſhe is no ſooner diſengaged from the Clog

and Encumbrance of the Body, but the dark Miſt, that hung before her is diſſipated in a Moment. She's like a Perſon ſtarting out of a profound Sleep: Her Underſtanding is enlarged to a prodigious Degree; and her Ideas depending now no more on a deluded Imagination, or the deceitful Information of ſenſitive Organs, are all clear and diſtinct, in relation to every thing that contributes to her Happineſs or Torment. And what a dreadful Load of Grief will this caſt upon a reprobate Soul, when all the Circumſtances of her unhappy State, all the Cauſes of it, which depended upon her own free Will, and irreparable Conſequences that attend it, are all clearly repreſented before her Eyes!

The Force of this Conſequence will appear evident, if we conſider, that the Paſſion of Grief, and other painful Paſſions, are all but ſo many violent Movements and Agitations in the Soul, excited by the Ideas of ſuch Objects as are diſagreeabe to us. For as we can neither *love* nor *deſire* any Thing, but as we conceive it to be ſome *Good*, ſo can we neither *hate* nor *fear* any Thing, nor *grieve* for it, unleſs we regard it as an *Evil*. And, by Conſequence, the clearer our Ideas are of the Objects which excite our Paſſions, the more violent are the Movements or Agitations,

which

which they cauſe in the Soul: As, on the contrary, weak Ideas, even of Objects of the moſt weighty Conſequence, make but weak Impreſſions on the Soul; as will appear beyond Diſpute from this ſingle Inſtance.

If we had a clear Idea in this World of the ineſtimable Value of *ſanctifying Grace*, our Loſs of it by any mortal Sin would afflict us in ſo violent a Manner, that we ſhould certainly die with Grief: Nature would be unable to ſubſiſt under the Weight of it. In like manner, if we had a clear Idea of *heavenly Beatitude*, we ſhould be inconſolable in being ſeparated from it, even for one ſingle Moment; nothing in this World would have any Power to affect us with Pleaſure, nor yield us any manner of Satisfaction. But 'tis the Incumbrance of corruptible Fleſh and Blood that weakens and obſcures our Ideas of ſpiritual Things; and the Weakneſs of our Ideas renders us ſo ſtupid, that neither the Loſs of an ineſtimable Good, nor our Baniſhment in this Vale of Tears, affects us with any ſenſible Grief; and we are even forced to have recourſe to the Help of natural Means, as Reading, and Meditating upon certain Truths, to work ourſelves up to a tolerable Senſe of what would otherwiſe overwhelm us with Anguiſh, if we had a true and clear Idea of the Unhappineſs of our State.

So that it is not the Nature of the Objects only, tho' never ſo afflicting in themſelves, but chiefly the Light in which they are repreſented, that excites our Grief. But when both are join'd together, and the moſt afflicting Objects are preſented to us in the ſtrongeſt and cleareſt Light that is poſſible, the Grief they cauſe muſt needs be violent and painful beyond Imagination.

Now this will help to lead us to ſome Notion of that violent Grief of a damn'd Soul, which we call the *Pain of Loſs.* We muſt therefore conſider, that the Soul of a Sinner dying in the State of mortal Sin, is no ſooner ſeparated from the Body, but has a full and clear Idea of the Dignity of her Nature, of the infinite Happineſs for which ſhe was created, and the Emptineſs of thoſe Things, for Love of which ſhe has forfeited her Title to it. She knows then, clearly, what it is to be made to the Image and Likeneſs of God; how great and noble the Character of a Chriſtian is, and to what Degree ſhe has diſhonour'd that Character, and debaſed herſelf by the Actions of her Life paſt. She knows then, clearly, that nothing leſs than the Poſſeſſion of an infinite Good can make her happy; that ſhe had once as good a Title to it as any Saint in Heaven; that it depended upon her own free Will to ſecure it for ever; that

that ſhe has forfeited it for meer Trifles, for Things of no Value, and that the Loſs is utterly irreparable. At the ſame time, ſhe has the moſt violent Inclination in her Nature to be happy, but ſees herſelf reduced to a State in every Circumſtance diametrically oppoſite to it.

Oh! what a dreadful Load of *Grief* and *Anguiſh*, what *Shame* and *Confuſion*, what *Rage* and *Deſpair* muſt all theſe afflicting Ideas cauſe in an unfortunate Soul, eſpecially when they carry with them a Conviction, that leaves no room for any Palliation or Excuſe! *Grief* and *Anguiſh*, for the Loſs of an infinite Happineſs: *Shame*, for having loſt it by her own Fault, when ſhe might have ſecured it with the greateſt Eaſe: *Confuſion*, for having loſt it for Pleaſures beneath the Dignity of her Nature: And, finally, *Rage* and *Deſpair*, to ſee herſelf juſtly doom'd to endleſs and unſpeakable Torments, without the leaſt Hope of ever receiving any Comfort or Mitigation of her Pains; becauſe the Incorruptibility of her Nature, and Unchangeableneſs of her State, renders her utterly incapable of it, and adds the Weight of *Eternity* to every Part and Circumſtance of her unhappy Condition.

This leads me to the third remarkable Difference relating to the Nature of Grief in this World, and that of a Soul ſuffering

independently of the Body. For the Condition of a Soul confined to the Body renders her ſubject to many natural Neceſſities, without which Life cannot ſubſiſt; we muſt eat and drink, and ſleep, to ſupport it. Beſides, a great Part of our Time is divided between the Cares, Employments, and Amuſements, incident to every State; and all theſe Things contribute to divert the Soul from attending to the Object which excites and nouriſhes her Grief; becauſe they naturally introduce many new Ideas, either of agreeable or indifferent Objects, which interrupt her melancholy Thoughts from Time to Time; and tho' they return again, they ſeldom repreſent the afflicting Objects in the ſame diſagreeable Light, and, by Conſequence, make a weaker Impreſſion than they did at firſt; which alſo wears off gradually with the Frequency of Interruptions. And thus it is, that Time ſeldom fails to be a Cure even for the moſt obſtinate Grief in this Life.

But Things are quite otherwiſe in the Life to come: For a Soul ſeparated from the Body is no longer ſubject to any of it's natural Neceſſities, nor diverted from one Thought to another by variety of Objects. Hence the Thoughts or Ideas which a damn'd Soul has in the Moment of her Condemnation, can never be changed nor interrupted; becauſe there is nothing either within her or about her, that

that can occaſion any ſuch Change or Interruption of Thoughts, nor by Conſequence repreſent Things to her in a different Light, at one time, from what they appear to her at another: No, Chriſtians, the Ideas of a damn'd Soul are always equally clear, equally ſtrong, equally convincing; and what ſhe thinks once ſhe never ceaſes to think of. The Rigour, Juſtice, and Eternity of her Pains are always preſent to her Thoughts, and always in the ſame manner as at the Moment of her Separation from the Body. And, by Conſequence, the Impreſſions of Grief, which thoſe frightful Ideas of her having loſt Heaven, and loſt it by her own free Will, and loſt it without Remedy; the Impreſſions, I ſay, which they make upon her in the firſt Moment of her Entrance into Hell, muſt of neceſſity continue in the ſame Degree of Violence for all Eternity.

Now what has been ſaid concerning the Paſſion of Grief, muſt be applied to all the other Paſſions of an unfortunate Soul: I mean, her *Shame*, *Rage*, *Deſpair*, *Envy*, *Hatred*, and the like. For, as the Objects, which excite and nouriſh theſe Paſſions, always are and always appear the ſame, ſo the ſeveral Impreſſions, Movements and Agitations, which they produce, muſt likewiſe be the ſame for ever; as is farther confirm'd from this clear Reaſon.

For if a damn'd Soul could change her Ideas, or paſs from one Object to another, her Condition would be ſometimes more, ſometimes leſs painful, according to the Nature of the Objects that ſhould work upon her. But ſince ſhe is always equally criminal, the Law of Juſtice ſeems to demand, that ſhe be always equally puniſh'd.

Oh! what a deplorable State is it to be for all Eternity in the Power of the moſt cruel and mercileſs Tyrants! to be for ever oppreſs'd with unſpeakable Grief, tortured with Rage and Deſpair, and burning with Deſires which will never be gratified! Yet this is the Caſe of every damn'd Soul, in Proportion to the Meaſure of Sins committed in this Life. For as every mortal Sin plunges a Soul deeper into Hell-fire, and removes her farther from the Poſſeſſion of God, ſo it heaps upon her an additional Increaſe of *Grief*, *Shame*, and *Deſpair*; and the more grievous her Torments are, the more ſhe *envies* the Happineſs of the Saints, and *hates* the infinite Juſtice of God, which inflicts them upon her.

Now then, let us take a ſhort Review of all the Circumſtances of the unhappy State I have deſcribed. Let us conſider a ſpiritual and immortal Soul, noble in her Nature, and little inferiour to Angels: A Soul, created to enjoy a Crown of Glory, baniſh'd

baniſh'd for ever from the Sight of God, and ſhut up within a dark and hideous Dungeon under Ground. 2*dly*, Let us conſider her thirſting ardently after Joys and Pleaſures, and doom'd to everlaſting Torments of unquenchable Flames. *Laſtly*, Let us conſider her without the leaſt Power of helping herſelf, abandon'd to the heavieſt Load of Grief, and the Fury of all her other Paſſions, acting inceſſantly upon her with their utmoſt Rage and Violence, and making her ſuffer all the Pangs and Agonies of a thouſand Deaths, yet abandon'd by Death itſelf; which, when all Comforts fail, is at leaſt a ſure Refuge for Grief and Pain in this Life. Then let us make this ſhort Reflection, but let us make it with a ſerious Attention, whether the Pleaſures of Sin will not coſt us a great deal too dear one Day, if we take not timely Care to expiate them with true penitential Tears.

Oh! let us grieve now, that we may not grieve for ever. Let us weep in Time, that we may not weep for all Eternity. But let us not throw away our Tears upon meer Trifles. The Sins we have already committed, and which we are ſtill in danger of commiting, demand and deſerve them all. We weep for a dead Friend, and our Tears cannot bring him to Life again;

whereas if our Souls be dead in Sin, we may reſtore them to Life with Tears of Penance: Heaven loſt may be redeem'd by them. This is the principal Uſe for which they are deſign'd, by the Author of Nature; and if we make this Uſe of them, they will moſt certainly prevent the eternal but uſeleſs Tears of the Life to come, and be a Source of everlaſting Comfort to our Souls.

The Sixteenth ENTERTAINMENT.

Reflections upon the Pains of Hell.

Who amongſt us ſhall dwell with devouring Fire? who amongſt us ſhall dwell with everlaſting Burning? Iſa. xxxiii. 14.

THO' the Truths I have deliver'd concerning the everlaſting Torments of Hell be very frightful, they will be of no Uſe to us unleſs we make our Reflections upon them, and draw Conſequences from them for the Conduct of our Lives. This therefore ſhall be the Subject of this Entertainment.

The Reflection, that firſt offers itſelf to my Thoughts, ariſes from the Conſideration of the dreadful Change of Condition, that

that befalls a wretched Creature, who having loved and enjoy'd the Pleaſures of this World, and being ſtill poſſeſs'd with the ſame, nay, a far more violent Paſſion for them, finds himſelf, all on a ſudden, plunged into everlaſting Flames. For if even the Fall of great Men in this World be apt to overwhelm them with ſuch a Load of Grief, as often ſinks them into utter Deſpair, how ſhall we find Words to expreſs or Ideas to conceive the Horror, Conſternation, Rage and Deſpair that ſeizes a Perſon, who having wallow'd in all the Pleaſures of a voluptuous Life, and indulged himſelf in every thing to the utmoſt of his Power, now ſees himſelf, in a Moment, reduced not only to an utter Privation of all his former Enjoyments, but to a State of endleſs Miſery and Torments! Oh! what a terrible Change is this, to paſs from Eaſe, Conveniences and Pleaſures, to eternal Pains! From the Gratifications of a ſenſual Life, to ſcorching Flames! In a Word, from all that Nature loves and admires, to a State made up of every Thing ſhe fears and abhors!

However, it would be ſome Comfort in this dreadful turn of Condition, if a damn'd Soul had but any Hopes left, that there was ſtill Room for another Change, tho' it were but after Millions of Years or Ages.

But

But what gives the heavieſt Aggravation to the Unhappineſs of his State, and compleats his Misfortune, is the certain Knowledge he has, that this is the laſt Change he is ever like to ſee; the Thought whereof being always preſent to his Mind, is the Food of that everlaſting Worm, which gnaws him without Intermiſſion, and never allows him the leaſt Glimpſe of Hope. He knows, alas, and to exclude all Manner of Comfort, is not permitted, either to doubt, or ceaſe thinking of it; he knows, I ſay, that the fiery Dungeon, to which he is condemn'd, is to be his everlaſting Habitation; that burning Coals is to be his Bed for ever; that Fire and Brimſtone is the only Air he is ever like to breathe; and that the curſed Company in which he now finds himſelf muſt always be the ſame: Finally, that neither his Eyes muſt ever ſee, nor his Ears ever hear, nor his other Senſes be ever entertain'd with any thing but what the divine Juſtice has ordain'd to be the Inſtruments of his Torments.

Saint *Tereſa*, as ſhe had a great Stock of natural Wit, join'd with a ſtrong and lively Faith, has left us, in her Writings, a moſt lively Deſcription of this dreadful Change of a Perſon paſſing in an Inſtant from a State of Pleaſures, Grandeur, and Eſteem, to that of Torments, Ignominy and

Diſ-

Diſgrace. " How ſhall I be able (ſays " ſhe) to expreſs my Grief, when I repre- " ſent to my Thoughts the Condition of " a Perſon, who having always ſeen him- " ſelf conſider'd in this World, always " loved, always waited on, reſpected and " careſs'd, ſhall in the Moment of his " Death find himſelf loſt for ever, and be " clearly convinced that his Sufferings will " never end! Nay, that it will now avail " him nothing to ſeek to turn away his " Thoughts from the Conſideration of " Eternity, as he was wont to do in his " Life: When he ſhall ſee himſelf ſepara- " ted, and, as it were, torn away from his " Diverti ſements and Pleaſures, even when " he ſcarce thought he had begun to taſte " them; becauſe whatever ends with Life " paſſes as a Breath or Vapour: When " he ſhall ſee himſelf encompaſs'd by that " ghaſtly and cruel Company, with which " he muſt ſuffer for Eternity: When he " ſhall ſee himſelf thrown into a ſtinking " Pool fill'd with Serpents, that will ex- " erciſe their utmoſt Rage upon him: " Finally, when he ſhall ſee himſelf en- " viron'd with that hideous Darkneſs, " which having no Light, but a gloomy " Flame, will only ſuffer him to ſee the " Inſtruments of his everlaſting Miſery and " Torments!

" O God!

" O God! How far ſhort is what I " ſay from the real Truth! And who " then blinded the Eyes of that unfortu- " nate Soul to ſuch a Degree, as to hinder " her from ſeeing that State of Miſeries, " till ſhe ſaw herſelf plunged into it for " Eternity! Who ſtop'd her Ears to " that Degree, as to render her deaf to the " Voice of thoſe who forewarn'd her a " thouſand times of the Grievouſneſs and " Eternity of thoſe Torments! O un- " happy Eternity! O Torments without " End or Mitigation! Is it poſſible that " thoſe ſhould not fear thee, who are even " ſo afraid of the leaſt bodily Inconveni- " ence, that they cannot endure to lie one " ſingle Night on a Bed that is not made " eaſy for them!

Theſe were the lively Ideas this Saint had of the terrible Change in the Condition of a Perſon paſſing from the Joys of this Life to the Torments of the next.

But let us now conſider, in the ſecond Place, how eaſy and delightful a penitential Life would ſeem to a Perſon under theſe unhappy Circumſtances, and how welcome a Meſſage it would be to him, if any one ſhould come to let him know, that Almighty God would deliver him from that Place of Torments, provided he would but for a certain Number of Years conſent to

ex-

expiate his paſt Sins by ſome rigorous Penance. Oh! with what Joy would he embrace the Propoſal! How would he pour himſelf forth in Praiſes and Thankſgivings for ſo ſignal a Mercy! For what Shadow of Compariſon is there between the leaſt Torment of Hell, and the greateſt Hardſhip of a penitential Life, eſpecially conſidering the Eternity of the one, and the ſhort Duration of the other!

Hence 'tis related in the Lives of the Fathers in the Deſart, that a certain Recluſe, having been for ſome time very cold and negligent in the Duties of his Calling, and falling into a dangerous Sickneſs, Almighty God was pleaſed to favour him with a Viſion of the Torments of Hell: But being come to himſelf, and reſtored to Health, he immediately order'd himſelf to be ſhut up within four Walls, in which cloſe Priſon he continued for the Space of twelve Years, in the continual Practice of ſo ſevere a Penance, that he was the Aſtoniſhment of all that knew him; and being ſometimes aſk'd why he condemn'd himſelf to ſo much Rigour, he always anſwer'd, if they knew what he had ſeen, they would not wonder at what he did.

And truly, if we had a lively Faith, either of the Rewards or Puniſhments of the Life to come, we ſhould be far from wondering,

dering, as we often do, at the Undertaking of thoſe holy Men and Women, who renouncing all the Pleaſures of this World, ſhut themſelves up to become perpetual Victims of Penance. For tho' we may juſtly admire the Power of God's Grace in their Reſolution and Conſtancy in perſevering for many Years in a continual Contradiction to their natural Inclinations; yet if we conſider at the ſame time the unſpeakable Torments, which may certainly be avoided by thoſe penitential Practices, we have no Reaſon to be aſtoniſh'd, that thoſe whoſe Hearts are deeply penetrated with this Truth, ſhould chooſe any Courſe of Life, tho' never ſo painful in itſelf, to ſecure themſelves againſt Evils that are infinitely greater. Nay, we muſt own, that this is even following the Light of natural Reaſon, and acting according to the Dictates of a true Chriſtian Self-love, if I may allow'd to call it ſo.

Hence it is, that impenitent Sinners are ſtiled *Children*, *Fools* and *Madmen*, by the Word of God; becauſe they act as irrationally in the Concerns of Salvation, as if they were wholly deſtitute of Senſe and Reaſon; ſince nothing can be more irrational, than to believe the everlaſting Torments of Hell, and not uſe all Endeavours ſuitable to each one's reſpective State to

avoid

avoid them. For which Reaſon alſo the Damn'd are repreſented by God's Word condemning their paſt Follies in theſe remarkable Words: *Senſeleſs that we were, we judged their Lives Madneſs*; to wit, the penitential Lives of holy Men, whom they deſpiſed, and look'd upon as Fools, becauſe they acted not according to the Wiſdom of the World; whereas, poor Wretches, they now experience, to their everlaſting Sorrow, that they themſelves were the Fools, and thoſe they took for ſuch, were truly wiſe, in ſecuring, whilſt they had it in their Power, their eternal Intereſt, tho' with the Loſs of all Things elſe.

But tho' all the Circumſtances of the Change I have ſpoken of, *viz.* of a *rich Man* paſſing from the Pleaſures of this Life to the Torments of the next, affords Matter for the moſt melancholy Reflections, there is ſomething ſingularly unaccountable in the Miſcarriage of the *Poor*. For when a rich Man loſes his Soul, 'tis uſually for Sins by which corrupt Nature is gratified in the moſt agreeable Manner: He lives continually encompaſs'd with a thouſand Snares and Incentives to Vice, becauſe his Wealth furniſhes him with Means to be at the Expence of ſatisfying all the Cravings of his Inclinations: And tho' in ſo doing he really acts the Part of a Mad-

a Madman, becauſe the preſent Gratifications are infinitely diſproportion'd to the Sufferings of his future State, yet conſidering the Corruption and Weakneſs of Man's Nature, it is leſs ſurpriſing to ſee him overcome by the ſtrongeſt and moſt inviting Allurements, than if none of theſe Provocations to ſin were before him.

When therefore a poor Man loſes his Soul, there's ſcarce any Thing in Nature to account for it, and we may ſay he damns himſelf purely *gratis*. The very Poverty of his Condition ſkreens him from the Vices that are moſt alluring to human Nature, as *Ambition*, *Luxury*, *Intemperance*, *Vanity*, and *worldly Pleaſures*, which uſually damn the Rich: Becauſe all theſe Vices being clog'd with a continual Expence to ſupport them, are out of the Reach of a Man that is forced to labour for Bread; and Experience is a convincing Proof, that Want of Opportunity is one of the moſt effectual Securities againſt Temptations. Beſides, the very Hand of Providence has put the Poor in a Way, which if they perſue but ſteadily, and with a conſtant Eye upon the End to which it leads, cannot but bring them directly to a happy Eternity.

And what then are the Sins by which they uſually forfeit that Happineſs to which

which they are entitled, both as *Chriſtians* and as *Poor?* Their Sins are ſuch as a Perſon acting rationally would avoid, tho' there were no Proſpect of a future Happineſs to induce him to it. For their very Nature is ſuch, as makes them become a perpetual Vexation of Spirit, keeps the Mind upon the Rack, and deſtroys all inward Peace of Mind, which is the only ſolid Comfort of Life: The Sins I mean, are *Envy*, *Hatred*, *Choler*, *Fretting*, *Murmurs*, and *Diſcontents*. For 'tis by a long Series of theſe uneaſy and tormenting Sins, that many paſs from the Miſeries of this Life to thoſe of the next; whereas if they ſubmitted with a chearful Reſignation to the Circumſtances in which Providence has placed them, and bore the Difficulties of their State purely for the Love of God, every thing would become tolerably eaſy in this Life, and Heaven would be their everlaſting Inheritance hereafter. But by continually fretting and repining at their own Condition, and envying that of their Neighbour, or keeping Malice in their Hearts, they both double all the Sufferings which God has ſent them, and deprive themſelves of the whole Reward promiſed to thoſe that bear them with a Chriſtian Patience.

Now all this Impatience, Envy, Murmuring and Repining, and indeed all other Sins, are

are chiefly owing to a Want of Reflection, and our not drawing rational Conſequences from the Faith we have of the infinite Rewards and Puniſhments of the Life to come. For the very firſt practical Conſequence, we ought to draw from this Belief, is, that whatever is a Means to preſerve us from the Torments of Hell, and bring us to the Poſſeſſion of the Joys of Heaven, ought to be regarded as a real and ſubſtantial Good, be it never ſo diſagreeable in itſelf; and, on the contrary, whatever puts us in danger of loſing our Souls, ought to be regarded as an Evil, tho' it be never ſo pleaſing to our Inclinations. Theſe two Principles alone, if deeply imprinted in our Hearts, would rectify all our Ideas of what we uſually call temporal *Goods* and *Evils*, and place every thing in it's true Light. For if we took our Eſtimate of Things from theſe two Principles, *Wealth* and *Poverty*, *Honours* and *Diſgrace*, *Afflictions* and *Proſperity*, would be conſidered no otherwiſe, than preciſely as they may have an Influence upon the Happineſs or Unhappineſs of our future State.

This leads me to a *third Reflection* upon the merciful Diſpenſation of Providence to thoſe whom God viſits with Afflictions in this Life. For whatever is a Means to reſcue us from eternal Evils, ought cer-

certainly to be regarded as a Mercy. Now nothing of its own Nature conduces more effectually to this End, than Sufferings, of what kind ſoever they be, or by what Hand ſoever they are preſented; and we are ſure to profit by them, unleſs by our ill Conduct we wilfully fruſtrate the Deſigns of Providence. The Reaſon hereof, according to St. *Auſtin*, is, becauſe it is an unalterable Law, that Sin muſt be puniſh'd either now or hereafter. It follows therefore, that the only Way a Sinner has to prevent the Rigour of God's Juſtice hereafter, is to do now Juſtice upon himſelf, either by Mortifications of his own free Choice, or by humbly ſubmitting to the Chaſtiſements of his heavenly Father. For tho' theſe Sufferings be not voluntary by way of Choice, becauſe it is not in our Power to avoid them, yet if we ſubmit heartily to them, we make them, as it were, become our own Act and Deed; and by ſo doing render them as acceptable to Almighty God, and ſatisfactory for our Sins, as other Works of Penance, which we voluntarily impoſe upon ourſelves.

But now, conſidering how backward Men generally are in puniſhing themſelves, when it is left to their own free Wills, and how apt every one is to ſpare and favour himſelf, ought we not to acknowledge it as a very

a very great Mercy, when God is pleaſed to reſcue us, as I may ſay, out of the Hands of our own Self-love and Sloth, and put us under a happy Neceſſity of ſuffering ſomething for the preſent, rather than reſerve us for thoſe terrible Puniſhments, which infinitely ſurpaſs, both in their Grievouſneſs and Duration, all the Sufferings we can imagine in this Life?

For what Compariſon is there between *temporal* and *eternal!* Suppoſe, for Inſtance, that a tedious and painful Sickneſs is the Croſs God ſends us, is not this much eaſier than to burn for ever in Hell-fire? If Poverty with the Inconveniences that attend it be our Suffering, is not this Condition far more tolerable than that of the Damn'd, who are not only reduced to an utter Privation of every thing they poſſeſs'd in this World, but have loſt Heaven itſelf, which we may ſtill ſecure if we pleaſe? If God be pleaſed to viſit us with the Loſs of Perſons that are deareſt to us, is this any thing to the dreadful Pain of Loſs, which the Damn'd ſuffer in Hell, and which we have ſo often merited by our Sins?

Finally, Suppoſe all the Sufferings of this Life were heap'd upon one ſingle Man, whereof there is no Example to be found, might we not yet look upon his State as infinitely happy, if compared with the Miſeries and Torments of the Damn'd?

How

How great a Goodneſs is it then in Almighty God to put it in our Power to ſatisfy his infinite Juſtice on ſuch eaſy Terms as are the ſhort Sufferings of this Life? What Mercy is it to accept of a Payment ſo infinitely diſproportion'd to the infinite Debt we owe him, and be content with the Satisfaction of a light and momentary Pain, from thoſe who have deſerved the everlaſting Torments of Hell-fire? Truly, whoever is not ſenſible of this Mercy has either loſt his Faith, and flatters himſelf that Hell-fire is a meer Fiction, or his Reaſon, in not judging it better to ſuffer ſomething for a Time, than be infinitely miſerable for Eternity.

But to come now to a Concluſion; it will not be amiſs to take a ſerious View of the State of our Souls, and conſider impartially what Tendency the main Body of our Actions have hitherto had; and if we ſhould continue to live on, much after the ſame way, what would be the End of it, naturally ſpeaking. Now all know that nothing but mortal Sin, unrepented of, can bring us to Hell. If therefore a Man's Conſcience reproaches him with nothing that is notorious, tho' he cannot have an infallible Security, he has however good Grounds to hope well of himſelf; and the longer he has ſerved God without offending him

him mortally, the better Ground he has for this Hope.

But if, on the contrary, a Perſon has gone on in a kind of regular Courſe of ſinning, he has but two Things to do in order to prevent his being condemn'd to everlaſting Flames: But theſe two Things are abſolutely neceſſary, *viz. Firſt*, to leave off ſinning once for all; and, 2*dly*, to do worthy Fruits of Penance for Sins paſt. If the Name of Penance ſtartles him, let him conſider that it is much eaſier doing Penance here, than burning in Hell. And ſince one of the two muſt be, his own Reaſon will direct him to the Choice he is to make: For we have it now in our Power to chooſe, but we ſhall not have it hereafter. Oh! if we could but ſee thoſe fiery Dungeons kindled with unquenchable Flames! If we could but hear the frightful Lamentations, Curſes, and Execrations of the Damn'd, how ſweet and pleaſing would the Name of Penance be! How ſhould we bleſs God's infinite Goodneſs for having ſpared us ſo long, and giving us ſtill Time and Opportunity to expiate our Sins, upon ſuch eaſy Terms as may be done in this Life!

Let us not then demur any longer upon the Choice we are to make; for all Time ſpent in Deliberating is but Time loſt: Every Moment of Delay makes but our Caſe grow worſe, by rendering our Return to God

God more difficult than it was before. For in the mean time our Enemy gains Ground upon us, our Habits take deeper Root, our Wills grow ſtiffer, our Hearts more corrupt, and, finally, our Paſſions more ſtubborn and rebellious againſt the Government of Reaſon and Impreſſions of Grace: All which are terrible Symptoms of a Soul advancing by large Steps to her eternal Ruin. O God, preſerve us from this Misfortune. Give us Grace to repent in time, that we may not periſh eternally.

The XVIIth Entertainment.

Of HEAVEN.

The Joys of Heaven ſurpaſs all human Underſtanding.

The Eye has not ſeen, nor the Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the Heart of Man the Things which God has prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

HItherto I have only repreſented Objects proper to affect us with Terror; but the Subject I am now entering upon

upon will nouriſh our Hope, and kindle in our Hearts the moſt ardent Deſires. 'Tis true, indeed, both *Fear* and *Hope* are neceſſary to preſerve the Ballance of the Soul, but they work upon her in a different Manner. We are dragged to our Duty by Fear; but Hope allures us to it with Pleaſure. The Fear of Puniſhment is often neceſſary to reſtrain the natural Current of Men's Paſſions; but the Hope of an eternal Crown is the nobleſt Incentive to Virtue, and prevails moſt upon generous Souls: 'Tis our Strength in Temptations, our Comfort in Afflictions, and our Refreſhment amidſt the Toils and Labours of this mortal Life.

Let us then examine, what God has revealed concerning the eternal Reward prepared for thoſe who love him here on Earth. I ſhall at preſent confine myſelf to ſome Reflections upon the Words of my Text, which ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

What the Word of God has revealed concerning the Joys of Heaven, *viz. That neither the Eye has ſeen, nor the Ear heard, neither has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for thoſe that love him*, imports two Truths: 1*ſt*, That the Nature of the Joys of Heaven is wholly unknown to us; and, 2*dly*, That they ſurpaſs

paſs all human Underſtanding. Now both theſe Truths furniſh Matter for Reflections proper to give us a great Idea of them.

For, in the firſt Place, the Nature and Quality of the Joys of Heaven being ſuch as are unknown to us, makes it evident, that they will be very different from what we experience in this Life; and this is a good Proof of their being true and ſolid Pleaſures: The Reaſon is, becauſe we certainly know, that thoſe of this World are not ſo; ſince they, who have had the very choiceſt of them at command, and drank the largeſt Draughts of them, have after all been forced to own, that they are but *Vanity and Affliction of Heart.* It would therefore be a very poor Commendation of heavenly Beatitude, to tell us it will be of the ſame kind with what many have experienced here below. But when, on the contrary, we are certainly informed, that it will be ſomething as yet unknown, and never taſted by any mortal Man; that the Figure of this World will paſs, and a new Scene appear, which no mortal Eye has ever ſeen; this cannot but give us a very advantageous Idea of that bleſſed State; becauſe we are at leaſt aſſured by it, that none of thoſe Pleaſures, which we already know by unqueſtionable Experience to be adulterate and falſe, will be admitted into

Heaven. Whence we may confidently conclude, that all its Joys will be ſolid and ſubſtantial; that is, ſuch as will fully anſwer all the Ends and Purpoſes of the moſt perfect and complete Beatitude.

I add moreover, that the Joys of Heaven being wholly different from thoſe we experience in this Life, gives us to underſtand, that even after the Re-union of the Body, they will not be borrowed from groſs and earthly Objects, nor by Conſequence conveyed to us by the Miniſtry of material ſenſitive Organs; for then they would be like the Pleaſures of this World, and *the Eye might ſee them, the Ear hear them, and the Heart of Man might conceive them*; but they will be of a pure, refined, and ſpiritual Nature, ſuch as are proper for a ſpiritual Subſtance, and a Soul delivered from the Clog of corruptible Fleſh and Blood.

However, St. *Paul* has given us to underſtand, that the *Body* will alſo have its peculiar Reward. Yet the Nature of this Reward, even as deſcribed by St. *Paul*, will be ſuch, that we can but have a very imperfect and obſcure Idea of it in this Life. His Words are theſe: *It is ſown in Corruption, it ſhall be raiſed in Incorruption: it is ſown in Diſhonour, it ſhall be raiſed in Glory: it is ſown in Weakneſs, it ſhall be raiſed in Power: it is ſown a natural Body,*

Body, it ſhall be raiſed a ſpiritual Body. 1 Cor. xv. 42.

Here we have the Body deſcribed by St. *Paul*, both as it is now, and will be hereafter. *It is ſown* (ſays he) *in Corruption*; becauſe it has the Seeds of *Corruption* and *Mortality* interwoven in its very Frame and Conſtitution. It is no ſooner brought into the World, but it becomes the Subject of Diſeaſes, and ſtands in need of being daily repaired with Food and Sleep, and frequently patched up with Remedies. Yet all this hinders not this crazy Houſe of Clay from mouldering away by inſenſible Degrees, and falling to the Ground in a ſmall Term of Years.

It is alſo *ſown in Diſhonour*; for of itſelf it is no better than a dead unactive Lump, and wholly unfit for any Function of Life, as appears plainly from the Moment that the Soul is ſeparated from it. *It is ſown in Weakneſs*; as being ſubject to numberleſs Infirmities, which keeps it in a continual Ebbing and Flowing, and ſuch a conſtant Circulation of Changes, that its State is ſcarce ever fixed for the Space of one Day. Finally, *it is ſown a natural Body*; that is, made of the ſame Earth as other Bodies, and is therefore a Hindrance rather than a Help to the free Exerciſe of our intellectual Powers.

This is St. *Paul*'s Deſcription of the Body in its corruptible and mortal State, and we all find the Truth of it by daily Experience. But its Condition will be moſt wonderfully improved at the general Reſurrection; for then, according to the Apoſtle's Doctrine, it will be raiſed in *Incorruption*, in *Glory*, in *Power*, and with all the Qualities and Advantages of a *ſpiritual Body*. Which doubtleſs gives us a general Idea of ſomething very *perfect*, *beautiful*, and *noble*. But when we come to examine our Ideas, we find them almoſt wholly made up of *Negatives*; for no Man can form a diſtinct and poſitive Idea of an *incorruptible*, a *glorified*, or *ſpiritual Body*, any more than he can conceive the Nature of a *Thought*, or the Subſtance of a Man's Soul; becauſe we have no Notion but of corporeal Extenſion and Matter. So that we rather conceive what the Body will not be, than what it really will be, at its ſecond Meeting with the Soul.

We know, for Example, that the Seeds of Diſeaſes and Mortality will be no longer a Part or Ingredient of its Conſtitution; that it will be no longer moleſted with jarring Qualities, which are the inward Cauſes of its Decay, nor ſubject to Alterations produced by outward Cauſes; that, finally,

finally, it will be diveſted of all its former Weakneſſes, and ſo fitted by the omnipotent Hand of God, that it will be no more a Clog upon the intellectual Faculties, but made to anſwer the very quickeſt Motions of the Soul.

All this, I ſay, we know, being aſſured of it by the revealed Word of God. But all this Knowledge amounts to no more than ſeparating from the Body the Defects and Infirmities that attend it in this mortal Life. But as to any clear or poſitive Notion, how a true and real Body can be *ſpiritual*, *impaſſible*, and *immortal*; or how it will be organized after the Reſurrection, or in what Manner the Soul will be affected by it, or act in Conjunction with it, theſe are Myſteries, concerning which we are yet wholly in the dark; and an humble Faith muſt ſupply the Defect of our Ideas, till God be mercifully pleaſed to favour us with an experimental Knowledge of the Happineſs of our future State.

But if the proper Nature, even of the Reward prepared for the *Body*, be unknown to us, the Joys and Pleaſures laid up for Man's better Part, the *Soul*, are yet farther removed from our Knowledge in this World. We are ſure it is by reaſon of their Greatneſs, Excellency, and Sublimeneſs, that they cannot *enter into the Heart*

of Man; and that they ſurpaſs all earthly Delights as much as the future State of the Soul will ſurpaſs that of her preſent Confinement to an earthly and corruptible Body. For ſince it is beyond all queſtion, that God has fitted his Rewards to the Nature and Condition of thoſe that are to enjoy them, there is no room to doubt but that the Delights, he has prepared for the Soul in her perfecteſt State, will be the pureſt and nobleſt of all Pleaſures; that is, ſuch as an immortal Soul, wholly ſeparated from all *earthly Allay*, or re-united to a *glorified Body*, can reliſh, and be conſummately happy in.

But if any one objects, that a bare Proſpect of Things unknown and unexperienced affords but little Encouragement to part with the preſent Enjoyments of Life, Nature being unwilling to renounce what is found experimentally pleaſing, in hopes of Things we know nothing of, nor how they will affect us hereafter; I anſwer, that tho' we have no clear or diſtinct Knowledge of heavenly Beatitude, we know in general that it is ſomething very great, ſomething highly excellent and charming: For the Word of God has taken care to repreſent it to us under the nobleſt Figures; as of an *eternal Feaſt*, an *everlaſting Kingdom*, a *never-fading Crown of Glory*,

Glory, and ſo forth. Now, ſuppoſe it were any Man's Caſe to be invited to take Poſſeſſion of ſome foreign Kingdom, and that he were at the ſame time informed, by Perſons of undoubted Truth, that this Kingdom abounded with all Things requiſite to make him a glorious and happy Prince, would he be ſo fooliſh as to deſpiſe it, becauſe he had not travelled into it, nor ever ſeen any Part of it, nor had any particular Knowledge of the proper Nature or Qualities of the Things that were to make him happy? Surely no rational Man would ever act ſo fooliſh a Part.

And is not this a faithful Repreſentation of our Caſe in reference to the *Kingdom of Heaven?* We are all invited to it; we are certainly informed, that it is a moſt glorious Kingdom; nay, a Kingdom abounding with every thing a rational Soul can wiſh to make him perfectly happy. 'Tis true, we know not diſtinctly what thoſe Things are; we have never travel'd into thoſe upper Regions of eternal Bliſs, where God diſplays his Glory to the bleſſed Spirits which encompaſs the Throne; nor have our Eyes or Ears been ever entertain'd with the charming Wonders of that Place. But we are undoubtedly aſſured, that our very higheſt Expectations will not only be fully ſatisfied, but

infinitely ſurpaſs'd: We are aſſured; that when we have put off theſe Bodies, we ſhall then have a clear View of thoſe ſurpriſing Glories which are now hidden from us: Which ſurely ought to be ſufficient both to inflame our Hearts with the moſt ardent Deſires of them, and ſpur us on to the Practice of all Virtues neceſſary to render us worthy to be admitted to them.

This will appear more evident from the ſecond Truth contain'd in the Words of my Text, *viz. that the Joys of Heaven ſurpaſs all human Underſtanding.* For it follows plainly from this Truth, that whatever State of Happineſs the Wit of Man can invent or imagine, tho' far beyond any Thing that has or ever will be attain'd to in this Life, comes infinitely ſhort of the real Bleſſings God has prepared for us.

Now to apprehend, as we ought, the Improvement that may be made of this Reflection, I will endeavour to ſet forth the moſt compleat and perfect State of imaginary Felicity, a Man can frame to himſelf; and by conſidering, firſt, what great and charming Things we are able to conceive; and then reflecting how little all this muſt, notwithſtanding, be, comparatively to a State of Happineſs, which for its Excellency and Greatneſs ſurpaſſes our Conceptions, we ſhall thence be able to make the trueſt Judg-

me

ment of the bleſſed State prepared for us in Heaven.

Firſt, then, let us ſuppoſe Almighty God ſhould create a new World or Terreſtrial Paradiſe, bleſs'd every where with a ſweet and temperate Air, enjoying a perpetual Day; beautified with all Variety of pleaſing Objects to delight the Senſes; and, in a Word, abounding with every Thing, not only to ſupply all the Neceſſities and Conveniences of Life, but even to entertain it with a continual Succeſſion and agreeable Variety of Pleaſures.

Next, let us ſuppoſe all Pains and Evils baniſh'd from this Place, as *Hunger* and *Thirſt*, *Heat* and *Cold*, *Wars* and *Enmities*, *Cares* and *Troubles*, *Diſeaſes* and *old Age*, *Sin* and *Death*; and, in a Word, whatever in our preſent State contributes to make Life uneaſy and uncomfortable to us. Laſtly, let us imagine ſome one choſen Creature endowed with all the rare Perfections both of Mind and Body, to fit him for the ſovereign Empire of this new World, and all other Creatures paying an entire Subjection to him, and ſtriving to contribute, with the utmoſt of their Power, to compleat his Happineſs.

Now we muſt own the State here ſet forth to be ſuch as, humanly ſpeaking, has nothing wanting to ſatisfy the higheſt Ambition

bition and largeſt Deſires of Man's Heart. For it both comprehends, in a very eminent Degree, every thing we uſually eſteem and admire, and excludes whatever Man's Nature fears or hates. In effect, who of us all would not think himſelf as happy as a rational Creature could wiſh or deſire to be, if it were his Lot to be raiſed to the Condition I have deſcribed? It is evident, that the higheſt Felicity, and moſt envied State of this World, is but Miſery and Servitude, if put in Ballance with it. Yet nothing is more certain, than that the real Beatitude of the other World is infinitely beyond this imaginary one, how raviſhing and delightful ſoever it appears to human Senſe.

Good God! Is Heaven then yet infinitely more charming than what exceeds by ſo many Degrees all the Delights this World can afford! Is the Felicity thou haſt prepared for thy faithful Servants, not only infinitely greater than all the real Bleſſings that have ever been enjoyed in this Life, but even ſurpaſſing all imaginary ones we can frame to ourſelves! Is it not Happineſs enough to be delivered from all that is painful to Nature, and to be made ſovereign Lord and Monarch of a Kingdom abounding with every Thing that is pleaſing and delightful to us? Has thy

Bounty

Bounty ſtill greater Bleſſings in Store for ſuch poor Wretches as we are? Yes, Chriſtians, for all that I have mention'd is within the Bounds of what is *comprehenſible*, and *can enter into the Heart of Man.* But the Joys of Heaven are too great to be conceiv'd; neither *the Eye has ſeen, nor the Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man, what God has prepared for them that love him.* And therefore, as there is no Proportion between what is comprehenſible, and what ſurpaſſes all human Comprehenſion; it follows, that the Heavenly Beatitude is incomparably greater than what I have deſcribed; as being a State, the Joys whereof neither Words can expreſs, nor Thoughts can reach.

'Tis true, the Word of God gives us an Account of the *celeſtial Jeruſalem*, much reſembling the imaginary World I have deſcribed. For it tells us, that it is a City, whoſe Walls are raiſed with *precious Stones*, and every Gate is made of a *rich Pearl*; that its Manſions are built with *choiceſt Jewels*, and the Pavement of its Streets are all *tranſparent Gold*; that in the midſt there runs a cryſtal River, perpetually flowing from the Throne of God, upon whoſe Banks are planted *Trees of Life*, making immortal all that but taſte its Fruit; that this bleſſed City enjoys an

everlaſting

everlaſting Day; becauſe *its Sun is the Lamb, and the Light that ſhines, the Glory of God*; that Hunger and Thirſt are baniſh'd from it; that the Inhabitants of this thrice happy City are *crown'd Heads*, and in ſecure Poſſeſſion of an *everlaſting Reign*; that the glorified Bodies ſhine brighter than the Sun, and being cloath'd with Incorruptibleneſs, enjoy an *ever-flouriſhing Youth*, and are delivered from all thoſe painful Diſeaſes, which inſenſibly deſtroy Nature, and are the uſual Harbingers of Death.

This is the Deſcription which the Word of God gives of the *Heavenly Jeruſalem* and it's Inhabitants. However, it is certain, that the greateſt Part of it is made up of figurative Expreſſions, accommodated to our earthly Taſte, and repreſenting the happy State of Souls in Glory, by Types and Figures of Things beſt known and moſt valued in this World. For if Gold, and precious Stones, rich Buildings, and other ſuch like ſenſible and material Objects were the Things that are to make us happy hereafter, the Joys of Heaven might eaſily be conceived, and every one would be capable of forming a clear Idea of them. And therefore, ſince we are aſſured, that they ſurpaſs all human Conception, and have never enter'd into the Heart of Man,

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the Conſequence is, that all material Objects, tho' never ſo precious, and all the Pleaſures of this World, tho' never ſo noble and refined, are but faint Shadows of the Bleſſings that conſtitute the eſſential Beatitude of the Life to come.

After theſe Reflections it will not be ſurpriſing, that the Saints had no other Concern in this Life, than how to ſecure Heaven to themſelves; that they had it always in their View, bore it continually in their Hearts, made it the Object of all their Affections, the Center of all their Deſires, and the End of all their Actions. For they were directed by the Light of Faith, and their Faith taught them, that God had created them for eternal and incomprehenſible Joys, to which the Enjoyments of this Life bore no Proportion. This was Inducement enough to make them deſpiſe the one, and continually thirſt after the other. This gave them a Diſguſt of all earthly Pleaſures, and made the Riches and Honours of this World appear as contemptible to their Thoughts, as they are in themſelves. This, finally, made them ſet ſo high a Value upon Heaven, as to purchaſe it, even with the moſt painful Sufferings. And this ought likewiſe to have at leaſt ſo far an Influence upon us, as both to render us faithful in the Diſcharge of all the Duties of a Chriſtian Life,

Life, and make us ſubmit chearfully to all the Croſſes and Afflictions, Almighty God is pleaſed to ſend us.

The XVIIIth Entertainment.

Of the beatifick Viſion.

Now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face. Now I know in Part, but then ſhall I know even as alſo I am known. 1. Cor. xiii. 12.

TO ſee God *Face to Face*, and know him *as he is in himſelf*, is that perfect and conſummate Happineſs of Man's Soul, of which I am now going to ſpeak: and I am very ſenſible of the Difficulty of the Taſk I have undertaken. For we are ſo unacquainted with what paſſes in the other World, that to treat of this Subject is like walking in a dark and unknown Path, where we may very eaſily either ſtumble upon ſome Error, or miſtake groundleſs Fancies for ſolid Truths. I ſhall therefore endeavour to proceed with ſo much Caution, as not to advance one ſingle Step, without taking either the holy Scriptures, or at leaſt ſome of the

the Fathers or approved Divines, for my Guide. I have already ſaid ſomething concerning the Glory of the Body, and ſhall at preſent only ſpeak of that Part of heavenly Beatitude which regards the Soul, and which St. *Auſtin* has epitomiz'd in theſe three Words; *videbimus*, *amabimus*, *laudabimus*; we ſhall *ſee*, we ſhall *love*, we ſhall *praiſe*. The firſt Word expreſſes the whole Subſtance of the *beatifick Viſion*, as Divines call it, that is, the Sight of God, which makes the Soul happy. The two other Words expreſs the immediate and inſeparable Effects of it; *viz.* the *Love*, *Joy*, and *Delight*, which reſult from this bleſſed Viſion in the Soul; of which I ſhall treat in my next Diſcourſe, intending to make the *beatifick Viſion* alone the Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis certain, that Man's Soul being a ſpiritual Subſtance cannot be happy but in the Poſſeſſion of ſome ſpiritual Good, nor perfectly happy, but in the Poſſeſſion of the moſt perfect ſpiritual Good: And therefore when the Scripture ſeems to promiſe certain ſenſible and material Goods, as *Crowns* and *Kingdoms*, *Youth* without Decay, *Wealth*, *Power*, and *magnificen Palaces*; when it tells us, that the Saints ſhall *eat* and *drink* in the Kingdom of God; finally, when it ſets forth the *celeſtial*

tial Jeruſalem as a City abounding in all ſuch Things as are moſt valued in this World, as built with *precious Stones*, paved with the *pureſt Gold*, beautified with *ſtately Towers*, and ſo forth, we muſt, as I have already obſerved, take care not to imagine as if the Enjoyment of Things of this Nature were to be the eſſential Reward of the Life to come. For this would be to ſet up a kind of *Mahometan* Beatitude inſtead of the *Chriſtian* one, and tranſlate the World itſelf into Heaven. And what can be the Conſequence hereof, but our making the World, inſtead of Almighty God, our laſt End, and the principal Object of our Love, Hope, and Deſire?

St. *Auſtin* himſelf, in his Comment upon the 86th *Pſalm*, has taken care to precaution us againſt this Error. *Let us beware* (ſays he) *not to propoſe to ourſelves any Pleaſures like thoſe we reliſh here on Earth. For otherwiſe all our Temperance, which makes us now abſtain from worldly Pleaſures, will be the Fruit of Self-love. There are thoſe that faſt, only to eat afterwards with a better Reliſh: If therefore you believe that the Pleaſures of Heaven will be like thoſe of this World, and you refrain from them now upon no other Motive than to enjoy them more fully hereafter, you imitate thoſe that faſt only to prepare themſelves*

ſelves for a Feaſt, and in their very Practice of Temperance are guilty of a greater Intemperance.

Thus St. *Auſtin*; who is very large upon this Subject, to prevent our falling into an Error which would utterly deſtroy the Love of God, and ſet up Self-love in it's Place. 'Tis therefore an undoubted Truth, that the eſſential Felicity of the Soul conſiſts not in the Enjoyment of any of thoſe ſenſible Objects or Pleaſures, to which Self-love inclines us in this Life; and that whatever Expreſſions in Scripture ſeem to favour this ſort of Beatitude, are not to be underſtood literally, but in a figurative or ſpiritual Senſe, as will appear beyond all Queſtion, from other Paſſages of holy Writ, which I ſhall have Occaſion to quote hereafter.

Firſt, then, the Scripture tells us, that the bleſſed Souls in Heaven ſhall *ſee God Face to Face*, that they ſhall ſee him *clearly*, and as he is in himſelf: For the better Underſtanding whereof we muſt obſerve, that to *ſee* and *know God*, are ſynonimous Terms, and ſignify the ſelf-ſame Thing. For Almighty God being a *pure Spirit* cannot be ſeen with corporeal Eyes; and the Soul being alſo a *ſpiritual Subſtance* has, properly ſpeaking, no Eyes but what are ſpiritual. Now the Eye of the Soul is her *Un-*

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derſtanding: Whatever therefore the Soul *knows*, ſhe is properly ſaid to *ſee*, and to *ſee clearly* what ſhe *knows clearly*.

This being ſuppoſed, the Scripture, I ſay, tells us, that the Saints in Heaven ſhall not only *ſee God*, but ſee him *clearly*. This is St. *Paul*'s Doctrine, in the Words of my Text. *Now we ſee as through a Glaſs in a dark ſort, but then Face to Face: Now I know in Part, but then ſhall I know even as I am known.* 'Tis true indeed, we know God in this Life, but we know him only by Faith; and tho' Faith be certain, 'tis however obſcure, it ſhews him not as he is in himſelf; we only ſee him at a Diſtance, and, as it were, through a dark Miſt or Cloud. But hereafter this Cloud will be removed from before the Eyes of the Soul. *Faith* will then ceaſe, and the *Sight of Glory* ſucceed in it's Place. And then will the infinite Beauty and incomprehenſible Majeſty of God appear in it's full Luſtre. God will then no longer hide his Face from us. No Cloud or Darkneſs will then interpoſe, to rob us of any Part of this bleſſed Object. But we ſhall ſee him clearly; we ſhall ſee him intimately united to us; we ſhall ſee him as he is in himſelf.

Oh! What a bleſſed Sight will this be! How glorious, how charming! How worthy of a Chriſtian Soul to covet and thirſt

thirſt after! For by thus ſeeing God clearly, and as he is in himſelf, we ſhall be perfectly acquainted with all thoſe dark and ſublime Myſteries, which now ſurpaſs all human Underſtanding: As the Diſtinction of three Perſons in one indiviſible Nature; the eternal Proceſſion of the *Son* from the *Father*, and of the *Holy Ghoſt* from the *Father* and *Son*, and the ineffable Union of the *divine* and *human Nature* ſubſiſting in one *incréated Perſon.*

2*dly*, We ſhall ſee all the infinite *Attributes*, that is, Perfections of God. We ſhall ſee that boundleſs *Wiſdom*, which *reaches ſtrongly from End to End, and diſpoſes all Things ſweetly:* That unlimited *Power*, which, with a ſingle Word, produced Heaven and Earth out of Nothing: That fathomleſs Depth, and inexhauſtible Fund of *Goodneſs*, which inceſſantly communicates itſelf to all created Beings; and that infinite *Mercy*, which prompted him to give his only Son to redeem Mankind.

Finally, in ſeeing God clearly we ſhall diſcover all the hidden Ways of *Providence* in the Government of this World. As why Innocence is often permitted to be oppreſs'd, and Wickedneſs to proſper: Why our Prayers are ſometimes heard, and at other times rejected: Why Miſeries and Poverty were the Lot of ſome, and Proſperity and

Wealth

Wealth the undeſerved Bleſſing of others. He that was perſecuted, hated, and contemn'd, will then clearly ſee why Providence allotted him that Portion. He that was ſick and poor, deprived of all Conveniences of Life, and forced to earn his Bread with the daily Sweat of his Brows, whilſt others enjoy'd their Eaſe, and wallow'd in Pleaſures, will then be throughly convinced of the infinite Wiſdom and Juſtice of this ſeeming Partiality, and confeſs that God was more favourable to him, than he would have been to himſelf, had he been permitted to make his own Deſires the Rule of his Choice.

All this, I ſay, and infinitely more than I am able to expreſs, will the Saints ſee, in ſeeing God; and that not confuſedly, but clearly and diſtinctly; not ſucceſſively or by Parts, but altogether, and at one ſingle, unchangeable, and eternal View. *Non erunt ibi* (ſays St. *Auſtin*) *volubiles Cogitationes noſtræ abaliis ad alias euntes atque redeuntes.* There, *viz.* in Heaven, our Thoughts ſhall not be roving, or paſſing to and fro from Object to Object; but from the very Moment the Soul is admitted to the beatifick Viſion, the Unſettledneſs and Wandring of her Thoughts, which Imperfection attends her in this Life, will forthwith ceaſe, and her whole Attention be eternally and immove-

immoveably fix'd upon one ſingle Object, which is God himſelf, in whom ſhe will ſee all Things neceſſary to render her completely happy.

It remains now only to ſhew, that this clear Sight or Knowledge of God is that which makes the Soul happy. Saint *Auſtin* gives this Reaſon for it; becauſe to ſee or know God clearly, is to *poſſeſs* him: *eum noſſe habere eſt.* And ſince a Soul, that's in Poſſeſſion of an infinite Good, cannot but be completely happy, it follows that the Soul's Beatitude conſiſts in this clear Sight or Knowledge of God. This Reaſon of St. *Auſtin* is grounded upon our Saviour's own Words, *John* 17th, where he addreſſes himſelf thus to his eternal Father: *This is Life everlaſting to know the only true God.* To know him by the dim Light of *Faith*, is but a neceſſary Diſpoſition to eternal Life; but to know him by the clear *Light of Glory*, is that which puts the Soul in a ſecure and everlaſting Poſſeſſion of him.

However, ſince to our Imagination there appears a large Difference between *ſeeing* and *poſſeſſing* a Thing, St. *Auſtin*, to correct this Error of Imagination, endeavours to prove it by this Argument, that in Relation to God they are the ſame. Becauſe God being the moſt excellent and tranſcendent

ſcendent Good, cannot be poſſeſs'd but by that Part of Man which is moſt excellent in him, *viz.* his *Soul.* And ſince the *Underſtanding* is the nobleſt Faculty, and *Knowledge* the nobleſt Operation of the Soul, he concludes, that whatever is poſſeſs'd by the Soul, is poſſeſs'd by knowing, *quicquid autem mente habetur, noſcendo habetur*; and thence he infers, that to know God clearly, is to poſſeſs him.

This is St. *Auſtin*'s Argument, which ſets this Matter in as eaſy a Light as it's Obſcurity will permit. In effect, all intellectual Beings, from the higheſt to the loweſt, have no other way of *poſſeſſing* than by *knowing*. God himſelf, who is the ſupreme intellectual Being, has from all Eternity poſſeſs'd himſelf, and been infinitely happy by *comprehenſively* knowing his own infinite Eſſence. The *Angels* are alſo perfectly happy by poſſeſſing God; and poſſeſs him no otherwiſe than by ſeeing him clearly. Hence our Saviour, to deſcribe their Happineſs, expreſſes it in theſe few Words, *the Angels in Heaven always ſee the Face of the Father which is in Heaven.* Now then, to come down to the loweſt intellectual Being, which is Man's Soul, ſince our Saviour aſſures us, that in the Life to come *we ſhall be like the Angels of God*, it follows, that our Happineſs will be the ſame in Sub-

ſtance

ſtance as theirs; and that as they ſee God *Face to Face*, and in thus ſeeing him poſſeſs him, and in poſſeſſing him are perfectly happy, ſo ſhall we alſo poſſeſs God by ſeeing him, and by poſſeſſing him be Partakers with them in eternal Bliſs.

Hence it is that holy *Job*, in the Extremity of his Afflictions, had recourſe to no other Comfort than the Hopes he had of being one Day admitted to this bleſſed Viſion. *I believe*, ſays he, *that my Redeemer liveth, and in the laſt Day I ſhall riſe out of the Earth, and be compaſs'd again with my Skin, and in my Fleſh ſhall ſee God, whom I myſelf ſhall ſee, and mine Eyes ſhall behold and no other: This Hope is laid up in my Boſom.* This alſo made the *Royal Prophet*, who had a lively Faith of the future State of Souls, expreſs ſuch ardent Longings to ſee God. *As the Hart*, ſays he, *pants after the Water-brooks, ſo pants my Soul after thee, O God; my Soul thirſts for God, for the living God. O when ſhall I come and appear before thy Face!* But why did this holy Prophet thus earneſtly deſire to ſee the Face of God? He gives this Reaſon for it in another Pſalm; *I ſhall be ſatiated, when thy Glory ſhall appear.* For he knew this bleſſed Sight would put him in ſecure Poſſeſſion of an infinite

Good, and leave no Desire of his Soul unsatisfied.

But if you ask how it is possible, that since there is an infinite Disproportion between the infinite Majesty of God, and the Littleness inseparable from the Condition of a created Being; since the Scripture tells us, that God *dwells in inaccessible Light*; finally, since God himself declared to his great Servant *Moses* desiring to see his Face, *that no Man can see his Face and live*; if you ask, I say, how it is possible that any Creature should be able to bear the clear Sight of God and intimate Presence of so great a Majesty? I answer, that no Soul would be able to bear the clear Sight of God, were she not first prepared and fitted for it by a certain supernatural Quality, which School-men call the *Light of Glory*. I will not pretend to explain to you the Nature of this Quality, but hope we shall one Day experience the happy Effects of it, and we shall then know what it is to our everlasting Joy and Comfort. However, Divines agree, that it is the most sublime and perfect Participation of the divine Nature, a pure Creature is capable of: So that as the very lowest Degree of *sanctifying Grace* surpasses in it's intrinsick Value any thing, tho' never so perfect, within the Sphere of *Nature*, so in

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like Manner this *Light of Glory* tranſcends in Excellency whatever is moſt ſublime within the Order of *Grace*. St. *Denis* defines it *influxus ſubſtantificus Divinitatis*, a ſubſtantial Influence of the Divinity. Which Expreſſion ſeems to import, as if Almighty God darted, as it were, ſome Rays of his own infinite Light into the Souls of the Bleſſed, to enable them to bear his divine Preſence.

Hence Divines attribute principally two Effects to this *Light of Glory*. The firſt is to fortify and ſtrengthen the Soul in ſuch a Manner as to enable her to ſubſiſt in the Preſence of God, and not be dazzled with the *Splendor of his Glory*. 'Tis of this Light, according to St. *Auſtin*'s Explication, the Royal Prophet ſpeaks in his 35th Pſalm, where he addreſſes himſelf thus to God, *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*; in thy Light we ſhall ſee Light. For here the Prophet diſtinguiſhes between two Lights, *viz.* that *which we ſhall ſee*, and that *by which we ſhall ſee it*. The firſt is God himſelf, and 'tis what we aſk, when we pray for the departed Souls, that *eternal Light may ſhine unto them:* But that, whereby we ſhall ſee it, is the *Light of Glory* I now ſpeak of. So that the Prophet's Meaning is, that by virtue of the *Light of Glory*,

which will be infuſed into us, we ſhall ſee God, who is himſelf *eternal Light.*

But no one ſpeaks more clearly of this bleſſed Light than the Prophet *Iſaiah*, Chap. lx. where his prophetick Spirit ſuddenly carrying him from the Contemplation of the future Increaſe and Proſperity of the Church militant to that of the Glory of the Church triumphant, he diſcourſes thus upon it: *Thy Sun ſhall be no more thy Light by Day, neither ſhall the Brightneſs of the Moon give Light unto thee: But the Lord ſhall be unto thee an everlaſting Light, and thy God, thy Glory. Thy Sun ſhall no more go down, neither ſhall thy Moon withdraw itſelf, but the Lord ſhall be thy everlaſting Light, and the Days of thy Mourning ſhall be ended.* Thus ſpeaks this holy Prophet, declaring thereby, that God will not only be clearly ſeen by the Saints, but that himſelf will be the Light whereby they ſhall ſee him.

The ſecond Effect which Divines attribute to this *Light of Glory* is it's raiſing the Soul in ſuch an eminent Degree above herſelf, as to render her, as it were, all *Godlike* and *Divine.* Now in this they ground themſelves upon this celebrated Sentence of St. *John*, *We know*, ſays he, *that when God ſhall appear, we ſhall be like unto him, becauſe we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

By

By which the Apoſtle means not barely a Likeneſs of *Conformity*; for that may be attain'd to by the Help of Grace even in this Life; but doubtleſs ſome *cloſer Union* and nearer Relation to God: But whatever it be (for no Words can expreſs it) we may boldly conceive ſomething extraordinary, and ſurpaſſing by many Degrees the moſt elevated *Extaſies* and *Unions*, the greateſt Saints have ever experienced in this Life; ſince theſe were only ſome kind of Antipaſts of future Glory.

And therefore ſpiritual Writers, to give us the higheſt Ideas poſſible of it, endeavour to explain it by the Similitude of a red-hot Iron, which has the Fire ſo incorporated with it, that it ſeems to be no more Iron, but tranſubſtantiated into Fire; or of a Drop of Water, which being pour'd into any Quantity of Wine loſes all it's Taſte and Colour, ſeems to change it's Nature, and be turn'd into Wine. For ſo the bleſſed Souls in Heaven, by virtue of that intimate Participation of Almighty God, are ſo cloſely united to him, that they ſeem wholly loſt in that Ocean of Bliſs, and become, as it were, one and the ſame thing with him. *For when God ſhall appear, we ſhall be like unto him, becauſe we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

O what a bleſſed Change will this be!

How different from that unhappy one, which attends the Soul at her Entrance into her clayey Manſion of a mortal and corruptible Body! For tho' ſhe be ſpiritual by Nature, and form'd immediately by the pure Hand of God, yet by being immerſed in Fleſh and Blood, ſhe takes ſtrangely after the Nature of her earthly Companion, and in ſome meaſure degenerates into Earth. *But when this corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this mortal ſhall be cloath'd with Immortality*, then will ſhe become the Subject of a quite different Transformation. Her heavenly Spouſe by uniting her cloſely to himſelf will then not only take away from her all Remains of earthly Allay, but enrich her with ſo large a Portion of his own Perfections, as to render her the perfect Image of himſelf. *For when God ſhall appear, we ſhall be like unto him, becauſe we ſhall ſee him as he is.*

But, to conclude; we muſt obſerve what follows immediately in St. *John*, *Every Man*, ſays he, *that has this Hope, purifies himſelf even as he is pure.* No doubt but we all hope to be one Day Partakers of this happy Transformation by ſeing God *Face to Face.* But we muſt conſider whether this Hope be well grounded; and St. *John* has given us here a Mark to judge by whether it be or no. *Every Man that has this Hope,*

purifies

purifies himſelf even as he is pure. For it follows hence that they, who make it not their Buſineſs to purify themſelves in this Life, hope in vain to ſee God in the Life to come: For which Reaſon alſo Chriſt has promiſed the clear Sight of God as a peculiar Reward to the clean of Heart: *Bleſſed are the clean of Heart, for they ſhall ſee God.* Now Cleanneſs of Heart, conſidering how prone Man's Nature is to Sin, can only be acquired by our daily endeavouring to waſh off the Stains we have already contracted, and adorn our Souls with the Virtues which will either be rewarded or perfected in Heaven: For tho' we ſeldom attain the ultimate Perfection of any Virtue in this Life, yet, to be rightly qualified for Heaven, we muſt poſſeſs them all in ſome Degree. There are certain Diſpoſitions indiſpenſibly requiſite to fit us for the State of Bliſs, and whoever goes out of the World without them goes unprepared.

If therefore we aſpire to eternal Happineſs, we muſt make it our Buſineſs to ſecure the neceſſary Diſpoſitions for it: If we deſire to poſſeſs God *in Glory*, we muſt firſt take care to preſerve him in our Souls *by Grace:* Finally, If we hope to be hereafter *like unto God*, we muſt ſtudy to become in ſome meaſure conformable to him in this Life, by cleanſing our Souls,

as far as this mortal State will permit, from all ſinful Defilements, and imitating his infinite Holineſs by the conſtant Practice of an innocent and holy Life. *For every Man that has this Hope, purifies himſelf even as he is pure.* And by thus purifying himſelf becomes worthy to be admitted to his bleſſed Sight, where he will *love* and *praiſe* him, and *rejoice* in him for ever; as I ſhall ſhew at large in my next Diſcourſe.

The XIXth Entertainment.

Of the *Love*, *Joy*, and *Praiſes* reſulting from the beatifick Viſion.

Lord, it is good for us to be here.
Matth. xvii.

THUS ſpoke St. *Peter*, tranſported with exceſſive Joy and Pleaſure to ſee his dear Lord and Maſter all glorious; tho' himſelf had no Share in this Transformation, but was a bare Witneſs or Spectator of it: And how then will a Soul be raviſh'd with Delight, when ſhe finds herſelf, all on a ſudden, tranſlated from the Miſeries

Miſeries of this Life to a State of Immortality and inconceivable Joys! With what feeling Senſe of her Happineſs will ſhe then ſay, *Lord, it is good for us to be here!* And how will her Joy be increaſed, when ſhe is undoubtedly aſſured of the Unchangeableneſs of her State, and that her eternal Abode is to be with Chriſt in Glory! When ſhe will not only ſee Chriſt's ſacred Humanity outſhining the Brightneſs of the Sun, but all the infinite Beauties and Perfections of the divine Nature; the clear Sight whereof is that which conſtitutes her *eſſential* Happineſs, as I have ſhewn at large in my laſt Diſcourſe; and will now proceed to explain it's immediate and inſeparable Effects: I mean, the *Love*, *Joy*, and *Delight* reſulting from this bleſſed Viſion in the Soul, which ſhall be the whole Subject of this Entertainment.

'Tis impoſſible to ſee God clearly, and not love him. Becauſe infinite *Beauty*, infinite *Majeſty*, infinite *Goodneſs* and *Perfection*, clearly ſeen, are Objects that command Love with an irreſiſtable Force. And therefore Divines ſay, that tho' the Saints in Heaven love God with the whole Propenſity of their Souls, and deſire nothing more than to love him, and ſee him eternally beloved by all his Creatures, yet, to ſpeak properly, they do not love him

freely; becauſe ſeeing nothing in him but what is infinitely charming and worthy of Love, they have it not in their Power not to love him, but are under a happy Neceſſity of loving him with the whole Capacity of their Souls.

However, to give you the cleareſt Idea I can of the Greatneſs of their Love, the proper Seat whereof is that Part of the Soul which is call'd the *Will*, it is requiſite to conſider the unhappy Condition of Man's *Will* in this Life comparatively to her happy State in the Life to come. Now Man's Will is commonly call'd by Divines a *blind Power*, becauſe ſhe has no Light of her own; but all the Light ſhe has is communicated to her by the Underſtanding, which alſo is oftner a falſe Light than a true one: If ſhe *fears*, *hates*, or *flies* any thing, 'tis becauſe the Underſtanding repreſents it as an *Evil*, whether it be real or imaginary. In like Manner, if the Underſtanding repreſents the Poſſeſſion of any thing as a conſiderable *Good*, or at leaſt as preferable to the Privation of it, the *Will* conceives immediately a Love for it, moves towards it with eager Deſires, if it be abſent, and is agreeably affected with it, if it be preſent.

But this Pleaſure ſeldom laſts long in this Life, but after a ſhort Enjoyment is either utterly

utterly deſtroy'd, or very much abated by ſome conſiderable Defect appearing in the Object, which inſenſibly weans the Will from her firſt Affection to it, and often changes it into Averſion.

Now this Inconſtancy and Changeableneſs of the Will in this Life is chiefly owing to the *mixt Nature* of all earthly Goods and Evils. For as there is ſcarce any thing ſo bad, but has ſome Good either interwoven in it's Nature, or reſulting from it, ſo there is nothing ſo good and perfect, but upon a ſtrict and impartial Examination ſome Blemiſh or Imperfection may be diſcover'd in it: And this is the Reaſon why neither our *Inclinations* nor *Averſions* are ever in a fix'd State in this Life, but are always either ebbing or flowing, according as *Good* or *Evil* appears to preponderate in their reſpective Objects. Thus the ſame Things or Perſons, differently repreſented, may appear very agreeable at one time, and very diſagreeable at another: We may purſue a thing with an eager Deſire to-day, grow indifferent to it to-morrow, and perhaps hate it the next Day after; becauſe what we loved at firſt being afterwards regarded in a different Light, we may diſcover Defects and Imperfections in it, which were before conceal'd from us.

Neither

Neither is this Changeableneſs of the Will only in relation to the Things of this World, which have all their Allay mix'd with their very natural Frame and Texture, but likewiſe in relation to the moſt important ſpiritual Concerns, and ſuch Things as our Faith aſſures us to be *unmix'd Goods* and *Evils*; as the Poſſeſſion of *ſanctifying Grace*, on the one hand, and the Loſs of it on the other. For no Man doubts but that *ſanctifying Grace* is an *unmix'd Good*, and the Loſs of it an *unmix'd Evil* in its Nature. Beſides, our Underſtanding directed by Faith is convinced that God is an *infinite Good*, and that the Practice of Virtue alone can ſecure this infinite Good to us, and Sin alone can deprive us of it. And how comes it then that the *Will*, being directed, as I have ſaid, in all her Motions by the *Underſtanding*, is not in a continual eager Purſuit after the Poſſeſſion of this Good? Or that ſhe flies not with the utmoſt Abhorence every thing that may rob us of it?

The firſt Reaſon hereof is, becauſe, however advantageous our Ideas are of Almighty God, and tho' we know them to be unqueſtionably true, yet they are ſo imperfect and obſcure, that they make but a very weak Impreſſion upon the Heart, which is much more powerfully wrought

wrought upon by the clear Ideas of *ſenſible Goods*, convey'd to her in a feeling and palpable Manner by the Miniſtry of the Senſes, than by meer *ſpiritual Objects*, propoſed by the dim Light of Faith, and which cannot be ſeen, nor felt, nor clearly underſtood.

The ſecond Reaſon is the almoſt continual Diſſipation of the Mind, diverted from the Thoughts of God partly by the Cares, and partly by the Amuſements of this Life. So that the Ideas we have of God either lying dormant by Inapplication, or being ſtifled in a Throng of worldly Thoughts, the Heart or Will is very little affected with the paſſing Glances we ſometimes caſt towards him.

But the third and principal Reaſon is, becauſe the Underſtanding itſelf acts many times a treacherous Part, confederate with the Enemies of our Salvation, and, inſtead of guiding the Will by the Light of *Faith*, ſeduces her by the Suggeſtion of Fleſh and Blood. So that, altho' it repreſents Almighty God as an *infinite Good*, it diſcourages the Will from purſuing the Acquiſition of it, by repreſenting it as a Taſk incumber'd with Difficulties almoſt inſuperable to human Nature. It paints upon the Imagination all the Reſtraints and Self-denials of a virtuous

tuous Life in ſuch frightful Colours, and ſets forth the Charms of Liberty and Pleaſures in ſuch an agreeable Light, that the Will, prevail'd upon by theſe deceitful Appearances, is eaſily determined to conſent to Sin for the Sake of the Pleaſure annex'd to it, and to reject God's Grace by reaſon of the Combats and Difficulties that attend the Preſervation of it. Becauſe *Pleaſures* are conſider'd as a *Good*, and *Self-denials* as an *Evil* to Nature.

This is the unfortunate Condition of the *Will* in this mortal State: ever various and inconſtant in her Deſires, purſuing with Eagerneſs imaginary Goods, and flying from imaginary Evils. But *when this Corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal ſhall be cloath'd with Immortality:* When *Faith* ſhall ceaſe, and the *Light of Glory* ſucceed in its Place, then will ſhe be entirely delivered from this ſervile Subjection to the Caprice of a deluded Imagination, and the Miſrepreſentations of a deceitful Underſtanding. Then will ſhe be no more in danger of relapſing into her natural Inconſtancy: Becauſe the Object of her Love will always *be* and always *appear* the ſame; that is, infinitely *beautiful*, and infinitely *charming*. And the *Light of Glory* ſhewing this bleſſed Object eternally preſent, and ſhewing it clearly,

ly, and as it is in itſelf, her Love will not only be without Check, but ſo immoveably fix'd, as to be beyond all Poſſibility of Abatement, Interruption or Change.

But now to bring theſe Reflections upon the two different States of the Soul into ſome Order and Method, the *firſt* material Difference between the Condition of a Soul in Bliſs and her State in this mortal Life is, that the Ideas we have of God in this Life are extremely *weak* and *obſcure*. We know indeed that there is a God, and that he is a Being infinitely perfect. Thus far our Faith directs us. But we have no diſtinct Ideas either of his Eſſence, or of any one of his infinite Perfections: becauſe we have no Light whereby to ſee or know them. And therefore as our Knowledge of him is weak and obſcure, ſo is our Love of him languid and unactive. But in Heaven, where the Bleſſed behold God *Face to Face*, where they ſee all his Perfections clearly and diſtinctly, and as they are in themſelves, their Wills being under no Impediment either from any Defect of Knowledge, or Mixture of Imperfections in the Object, they love him from the very firſt Moment with the whole Capacity, Strength, and Power of their Souls.

2*dly*, In this Life we are continually converſant

converſant with ſenſible Objects, and the Heart is moſt lamentably divided between God and his Creatures. Huſband and Wife, Children, Friends and Relations, external Goods, and temporal Concerns, are but too apt to challenge a large Share in our Affections; and we all find by ſad Experience what powerful Attractives theſe ſenſible Objects are, and how forceably they draw us towards the Earth, ſo that the Love even of the *Juſt* in this Life is commonly ſo imperfect, that tho' God reigns *ſovereignly*, he reigns not *abſolutely* in their Hearts: I mean, tho' his Love be *predominant*, it is not without Check or Allay, but has many inferiour Partners with it.

But in Heaven, where the Saints are wholly abſorpt in God; where, to ſpeak properly, they ſee nothing but God, becauſe they ſee him in every Thing, and every Thing in him; where, finally, all their Thoughts center in God, and are inceſſantly employ'd in the Contemplation of this charming Object; they alſo love God with a ſimple, pure, and undivided Love. Their Hearts is a Throne whereon God reigns as abſolute Monarch, and Part of their Souls is ſo fill'd with him, that there is no Room for any Thing elſe; or if they love his Creatures, it is purely in him,

him, and for his Sake. So that all the Love they have either for themſelves or others, is ultimately terminated in God. And, in a word, God is all in all Things to them.

3dly, As our Attention in this World is often diverted from God by the Cares and Amuſements of human Life, ſo is the Love even of the Juſt but too frequently interrupted. It is ununiform, unfix'd, inconſtant, and like an intermiting Fever divided between cold and hot Fits. But in Heaven, where the Saints have the Eyes of their Souls immoveably turn'd towards their beloved Object, and nothing interpoſes to take God out of their Sight, their Love is uniform, conſtant, and uninterrupted. 'Tis one eternal Act, or rather one eternal Extaſy and Rapture. 'Tis a Fire (as St. *Auſtin* calls it) that always burns, becauſe the Fuel, that nouriſhes it, is never conſumed.

But the moſt material Difference, and Ground of all the reſt, is, that altho' Man's Soul be created to enjoy God eternally, and has by Conſequence an Inclination in her Nature to be united to him, yet in this World this Inclination is ſo ſmother'd under the Weight of Fleſh and Blood, or weaken'd by the continual Oppoſition of the contrary Inclinations of the Body, that

that it is ſcarce able to exert itſelf, ſeems many times wholly extinct, and even when it is moſt active carries her but very ſlowly and feebly towards her laſt End.

But when ſhe is now wholly diſengaged from this Clog or Incumbrance, when this heavy Load of Fleſh and Blood, which bore her down to the Earth, is now taken off, no Tongue can expreſs with what Activity or rather Violence a Soul, perfectly purified from Sin, is carried towards God the only Object, Source, and Center of her Happineſs. We may juſtly compare it to the impetuous Current of a rapid River, when the Banks that kept it in are broke down; or to the violent Motion of a Stone, that is carried down with its whole Weight to its Center, when the Obſtacle that held it up is removed. For juſt ſo when the Soul is now deliver'd from the Clog of the Body, and broke looſe from the Chains that held her captive, the Inclinations ſhe has in her Nature to be united to God will carry her to this beloved Object with an Impetuoſity not to be expreſſed in Words.

And who then can conceive the Extaſies of Love and Joy, when ſhe now finds herſelf in full Poſſeſſion of the infinite Good for which ſhe was created,

and

and to which her Nature carries her with ſuch ardent Deſires! who can tell me with what Delight ſhe plunges herſelf into that Ocean of Bliſs, with what Avidity ſhe drinks of that Torrent of Delights! with what ardent Affections ſhe throws herſelf into the Embraces of her heavenly Spouſe! Methinks I hear her congratulate with herſelf as ſhe is repreſented in the Canticles of *Salomon*, *I have found whom my Soul loveth, I have laid hold of him, and I will not let him go.* I have found him who is the only Joy and Delight of my Heart; my Spouſe, my ſovereign Good, my God and my All. I have found him, and nothing ſhall evermore ſeparate me from him.

However, tho' it be impoſſible either to expreſs or conceive the exceſſive Joy of a Soul now in ſecure Poſſeſſion of eternal Bliſs, I cannot end my Diſcourſe without ſaying ſomething of it. And all I can ſay is, that her Joy will be proportion'd to the infinite Greatneſs of the Good ſhe poſſeſſes on the one hand, and the ardent Love ſhe has for it on the other. *Their Joy* (ſays St. *Auſtin*) *will be according to the Meaſure of their Love: their Love will be according to the Meaſure of their Knowledge: and their Joy in thee, O Lord, will be equal both to their Knowledge and Love of thee.* So that as the bleſſed Souls will be wholly fill'd with

with God, ſo will they alſo be fill'd or rather overwhelm'd with exceſſive Joy, Delight, and Pleaſure.

Hence the *Royal Prophet* ſays, that the Bleſſed in Heaven *ſhall be inebriated with the Plenty of the Houſe of God.* Which figurative Expreſſion repreſents moſt naturally the Superabundance of their Delight and Joy: For as the Virtue of Wine by Inebriation makes the Heart light, and forget paſt Sorrows; ſo will the large Draught of heavenly Delight cauſe a certain divine Inebriation or Drunkenneſs in the bleſſed Souls, the happy Effects whereof will be eternal Tranſports of Joy, and utter Forgetfulneſs of all paſt Sufferings, Conflicts, Perſecutions and Afflictions: The delicious Wine preſented to them by their heavenly Bridegroom will utterly drown all paſt Sorrows, and their undoubted Aſſurance of the Perpetuity of their State, and their being now for ever deliver'd from them, will perfectly complete their Joy. No more Troubles, no more Combats, no more Perſecution; no more Hunger or Thirſt, Heat or Cold, Poverty or Pain, Sickneſs or Death.

O bleſſed Joys! O happy State! To be for ever deliver'd from the very Fear of any Evil, and enjoy whatever the Heart can wiſh or deſire! *To ſee* God clearly,

to

to love him ardently, to *praiſe* him, and *rejoice* eternally in him! To poſſeſs what we ſhall never ceaſe to love, and love what we ſhall never ceaſe to poſſeſs! Oh! how truly may we ſay with the Royal Prophet, *Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy Houſe O Lord, they ſhall praiſe thee for ever and ever.* They ſhall praiſe thee for ever, becauſe they ſhall never ceaſe to love thee, and they ſhall never ceaſe to love thee, becauſe they ſhall never ceaſe to behold thy bleſſed Face.

But, O unhappy Mortals, who are yet confined to this Vale of Tears! Unhappy Mortals, who are baniſh'd from thy bleſſed Sight, and condemn'd to ſee thee with Fear and Trembling amidſt a thouſand Dangers in the darkſome Labyrinths of this miſerable World. However, permit us not at leaſt, O God, to be ſo miſerable as to fall in love with our Miſery; permit us not to grow fond of our Exile, or ſit down ſatisfy'd under our Chains. But ſince it is by thy Appointment we are baniſh'd for a Time from thy Preſence, let us indeed ſubmit to the Sentence, but at the ſame time let us be heartily ſenſible, that our greateſt Misfortune in this Life is to be ſeparated from thee, ſince otherwiſe we are in danger of loſing thee for ever. And therefore, leſt our preſent Baniſhment ſhould unhappily

pily terminate in an everlaſting Separation hereafter, grant that, tho' we live on Earth, Heaven may always be the principal Object of all our Wiſhes, Hope, and Deſires; that like true *Iſraelites* we may deſpiſe the inſipid Pleaſures of the ſinful *Babylon* this World: And when our Inclinations invite, or even importune us to partake of the *Babyloniſh* Joys, grant that we may reject their Solicitations with a Chriſtian Diſdain, and anſwer them as the *Iſraelites* did: *How ſhall we ſing or rejoice in a ſtrange Land! If, I forget thee O Jeruſalem, let my right Hand be forgot: Let my Tongue cleave to the Root of my Mouth, if Jeruſalem be not my chief Joy.*

O heavenly *Jeruſalem*, thou City of perfect Joy and Peace! Thou Dwelling-place of Saints and Angels! Thou Palace of the King of Glory! Be thou the only Object of our Love, the only Mark at which all our Hopes and Wiſhes may be level'd, the only indiviſible Point where all our Hearts Deſires may center. Let this World become deſpicable to us: Let us count all Things in it as Dung to purchaſe thee; that when the Term of our Exile is expired, we may be worthy to be received into thy ſacred Manſions, there to *ſee* and *love* and *praiſe* God for all Eternity.

6 NO 63

The End of the FIRST VOLUME.

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